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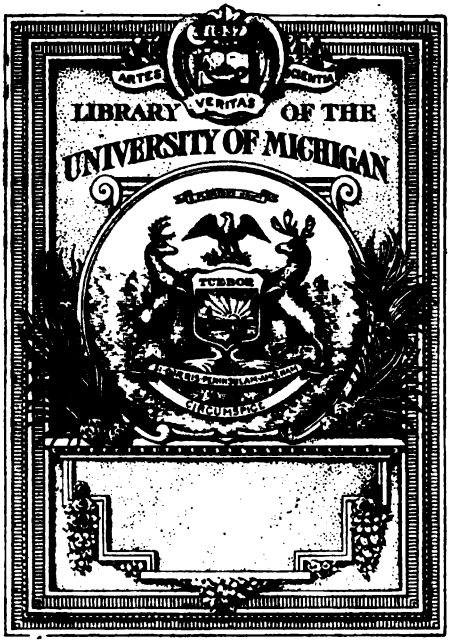
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THE GENTLE SAVAGE

THE GENTLE SAVAGE

BY

EDWARD KING



THIRD EDITION.

BOSTON
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1883

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THE GENTLE SAVAGE.

CHAPTER I.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

The wanderer paused for a moment, as he entered the sweet valley in which Interlaken stands, to look down on the waters of the swiftly-rushing Aar. Then he resumed his walk with a long, swinging stride, which gave his progress a kind of savage grace. He walked as men walked before clothes were made.

It was seven o'clock in the evening, and a cool breeze from the Lake of Thun came through the vale, fanning the traveller's temples, and bringing delicate perfumes from the meadows in which the newly-mown hay was lying. The Jungfrau had been wrapt in her misty shroud all day, but now she had thrown it aside, and stood revealed in her matchless splendour. As the new-comer reached a point from which he could see the noble peak, an admiring cry came to his lips. He stepped under the broad-spreading boughs of a walnut-tree on the Höheweg, let his little knapsack slip from his shoulder down to his feet, took off his hat, and stood reverently looking at the snow-clad virgin of the Bernese Alps.

In all his journey through Switzerland, he had seen

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nothing more lovely than this tranquil nook, sheltered on either side by gigantic mountain ranges, with cloud wreaths hovering about their summits. The rich green of the forests, the gray and mottled tints on the rocks, the intense blue of the sky, the calm and dewy fragrance of the fields, the houses half hidden in foliage, made up a picture with which he was completely pleased. Yet he turned from his worship of the Jungfrau with a sigh, and when he took up his pack, and moved away again, there was a look of discontent upon his handsome face. The young ladies from Germany and England and America, who were enjoying their evening promenade in the avenue, twittered and glanced backward as he passed by them, for he was the most noticeable figure that they had seen in Interlaken for many a day. The blonde serving-maids, lazily following their mistresses, gazed rapturously at him, for to them he seemed a demi-god. The old invalids, hobbling homeward because the dews were beginning to fall, looked approvingly on him, and seemed to get a certain vitality from his momentary presence. Christian Steiner, the guide from the Grindelwald, took off his hat, as he was wont to do before strangers whose appearance impressed him. A great St. Bernard dog came out from the gate of one of the fashionable hotels, crossed over the road and sniffed at the stranger's legs, then followed him meekly and with friendliness for a short distance, accepting a caress as if it were something to be proud of.

Presently the new-comer left the long line of summer caravanseries behind him, passed through the small hamlet of Aarmuhle, which joins hands with Interlaken, and turned to the right, crossing the Aar by the road which leads over the bridge into Unterseen. At the Hotel du Pont he halted, went into the garden on the bank of the stream, and in rather indifferent French asked the waiter

who came running to meet him for a room and for some supper. The waiter took his luggage, and flew as if to execute his commands, leaving him standing in the shade, with his head bent slightly downward, like one engaged in deep thought.

He was a tall, erect young man, with no small amount of what cautious and timid Europeans would call "defiance" in his demeanour. He stood squarely on his feet, and his garments, although of ordinary cut, assumed a symmetry to which it was easy to see that the excellent outlines of his form compelled them. The unconscious ease of his motions and the grace of his person in repose were evidently part of an inheritance from ancestors who had not been confined into and crippled by the conventionalities and unhealthy practices of modern society. He did not seem born to move in streets, and to cross from sidewalk to sidewalk at right angles; but rather with eager step to scale mountains, or easily to take his way across broad prairies. His face was thin and oval, and its colour was not unlike that of new and highly-polished bronze. The features were mainly strong, but regular, and full of the imperious nobility which had won the heart of the dog and had made the guide Christian Steiner take off his hat. About the temples and around the eyes the swarthy skin darkened into a copper-like hue. Yet, thanks to the eyes, which were large and lustrous, this face was more fascinating than if it had been white, and women said that it was full of beauty. The hair was jet black, straight, and long. It hung down to the young man's shoulders. But it gave him no appearence of effeminacy; on the contrary, it appeared to add to the proud manliness of his general aspect. He had no beard, and his thin and clearly-cut lips had no need of the concealing shade of a moustache. If there was any sign of weakness in the face it was in the chin, which was a trifle

weaker than the other features, and did not seem to belong to the same class of race marks as the black hair and the bronze hue. The memory of a mingling of bloods haunted the face.

Now there is one thing which a strong and healthy youth of twenty-three can never forget after he has been walking up hill and down dale for eight consecutive hours, and that is that he is invaded by a roaring, unreasonable hunger, which grows every moment stronger until it is satisfied. And, as our friend had come over the Brunig Pass and through the Hasli Thal that afternoon, walking with an ease and rapidity which were the admiration and envy of all the tamer pedestrians whom he outstripped, it is not astonishing that he knocked loudly on the table, and expressed considerable annoyance when he found that the waiter had paid no attention whatever to his vague order for supper. Hunger had brought the youth out of his reverie, and he was indignant that he could not eat at once. He frowned so that the shock-headed serving-man's knees smote together, and that humble individual betook himself to the kitchen to order, with a perceptible whimper in his voice, "everything and anything that might be ready, for a black looking stranger, who had an eye like an eagle of Murren."

This animated description produced the desired effect in the culinary department. In a few minutes the traveller was seated near the stone wall under which the rapid Aar is for ever singing its song, and the aroma of roasted meat was abroad in the garden. The stranger rejected the huge bottle of beer which the waiter placed inquiringly before him; ordered with discrimination an inexpensive wine from the card which was next proffered; ridiculed the servant for not placing fresh water within a thirsty man's reach, when hundreds of millions of gallons were running in the channel at their very feet; and

then did ample justice to all the viands, well and ill-cooked.

While he was finishing his last modest glass of wine, the waiter brought the *Fremden-Liste* — the local journal, containing the names of distinguished persons then honouring Interlaken with their presence — and laid it on the table.

"Ah! yes," said the youth in English, "that's exactly what I want;" and he picked it up and glanced eagerly through its columns. Under the head of "Hotel Jungfraublick" he found an address which he carefully noted down in a memorandum book.

"As Monsieur sees, it is a fine moonlight evening, and there will be a great crowd at the Kursaal," the waiter ventured to remark in French, which, although fluent, was even more indifferent than that of the new-comer.

"The Kursaal? What is that?"

"Monsieur will find that it is a very nice place of public resort, where all the honourable ladies and gentlemen staying at Interlaken assemble in the evening to hear the music."

"Good. I will go there."

He found his way to his chamber, brushed the dust from his clothing, dipped his hands and face in the cool glacier water which stood on the toilette-table, looked carelessly at himself in the diminutive mirror hanging near his bed, muttered, "That will do!" and fifteen minutes later was strolling — if a man with such an imperial gait could be said to stroll — through the pretty gardens of the Kursaal.

It was a warm night in August. The moon shone splendidly forth, and a roseate reflection of her glory now and then rested on the Jungfrau's snowy brow. A few clouds swam in the heavens; breezes nestled in the odorous thickets, or played hide-and-seek in the great alley

where the sentinel walnuts stood. Behind the wooden hemicycle of the Kursaal the Aar rushed merrily through placid meadows, and the tremendous mass of the Harder stood out, black and grim, against the Italian blue of the sky. In this sheltered valley hosts of semi-tropical plants bloom richly in the fragrant midsummer, and their perfume awakened in the youth's mind memories of the lovely shores of the lakes of Italy from which he had recently come — of Como's exquisite banks, of vine and flower-surrounded Bellaggio, and of the wonderful islands in Lago Maggiore, with their terraces crowded with lustrous blooms, and their bushes in which nightingales sing.

The orchestra was playing a mad Strauss waltz, in the rapturous measures of which the moonlight and the carols of birds and the rippling measures of the Aar seemed, by some curious magic, to have got entangled. The music stirred the youth's blood and drew him toward it. He entered the great space, where lights were gleaming, and people from every country under the sun were seated at little tables, drinking beer, or wine, or chocolate, and smoking cigarettes and listening, or were giving attention to the waltz without puffing smoke or absorbing liquors. As he sat down not far from the pavilion in which the musicians were playing, and in the very front rank of the listeners, the waltz became more and more voluptuous, dreamy, intoxicating, and the youth listened, his whole frame aglow with sensuous delight. But presently the measures died away, reeling as if overcome by the excess of their passion; then the refrain ceased, and a buzz of conversation sprang up in the crowd. At that moment the discontent and the restless sorrow which were so plainly written upon the youth's handsome face chased away the sensation of delight which the music had caused, and asserted themselves more earnestly than ever before. He remembered that he had come to Europe — to this

place — with a purpose, with a task to perform; and he could not rest so long as his duty remained unfulfilled. The hundreds of people near him, who seemed so happy, so devoid of care, so purposeless, annoyed and oppressed him. He was angry with the thoughtless world which could not or would not divine that he was the victim of a gross injustice, and that he was determined to redress a wrong which had assumed formidable proportions.

While he was engaged in his gloomy meditations, the leader of the orchestra took up his wand again, and the musicians began to play a composite selection, into which all the great airs of Gounod's "Faust" had been skilfully interwoven. As under the deft hands of the players the beautiful melodies, the half-articulate cries of passion, the murmurs of supernatural spirits struggling for mastery over a soul, and the ecstatic song of triumphant love, one by one fell on the soft air; as the subtle witchery which Gounod, the great modern high priest of religious mysticism, has entwined about Goethe's immortal poem, made itself felt, the youth's discontent and bitterness increased. The spirit of evil who stalks abroad, majestic and impressive, in the opera of "Faust," seemed to have placed his burning hand upon the young man's brow. The music discouraged the youth so profoundly that his thin lips relaxed and his eyes glistened. He had seen the opera produced in splendour on the Paris stage, and the real significance of Faust had penetrated his soul. The music recalled to him his impression of the hapless hero of the opera as a helpless puppet in the hands of spirits infinitely more powerful than himself — as a being doomed to love, to sin, to suffer, to be punished, and to bring harm to the innocent, without being able to stand up against his fate. He could not have given expression to the train of thought which the music had intensified in his mind in any other manner than by repeating, as he

straightway did, in an energetic manner, and bringing down his right hand smartly upon the table at which he sat —

"The world is all wrong! the world is all wrong! At any rate, human society is hopelessly, fatally wrong! We must have a new society — a new world!"

Having thus formulated his proposition, in the impulsive manner characteristic of him, the young man came out of his dream, and for a moment or two looked rather wildly, and perhaps a little stupidly, about him; for, now that the violence of his emotion had culminated, he was dimly conscious that his sudden explosion of thought might possibly have a ridiculous side to it. And he could not, even had he been ordered on pain of death to do so, have explained to any one the subtle analogy in his mind between his own discontent with the present constitution of society and the great eloquent cries of human and superhuman anguish and despair which are heard throughout the opera of Faust.

He withdrew his hand from the table, and began to hope that his outburst had escaped the attention of any one who might have understoood his language. But he was somewhat disconcerted, as the last notes of the music died away, to see his nearest neighbour lean toward him, and, with a benevolent although rather amused expression on his countenance, beckon him to approach. He flushed hotly, but moved in the direction indicated, fancying that he was about to hear some sort of rebuke for his passionate conduct.

The gentleman who accosted him was a large, pleasant-faced personage, wrapped in a light gray overcoat. Health and honesty beamed from his clear blue eyes, and happiness sat on his brow. He removed his hat courteously, and said to the youth in English, with a scarcely perceptible German accent —

"I beg your pardon, but will you allow me to ask you why you spoke as you did just now? I happened to hear you, and as my train of thought was then proceeding in an exactly opposite direction, I fancied — well, in fact, I was curious to know why you think the world is all wrong, when I think it is all right."

"There was no suspicion of sarcasm in the grave voice, and the young man felt reassured. At the same time he was determined not to be lacking in politeness. He in turn took off his hat, and answered, rather hesitatingly —

"Well, sir, I suppose I — indeed, I must apologize for thinking aloud. I reckon the music started my train of thought, as you call it, rather faster than was necessary. I'm right sorry to have disturbed you. I did not know that there was any English-speaking person so near me."

"My dear sir, half the persons in this audience are English or American. If a man wanted to promulgate a theory to members of the Anglo-Saxon community, he could not have a better opportunity than is furnished right here."

The youth flushed again, but a look from the honest blue eyes quelled his impatience.

"I have no ambition, sir," he said, "to be a prophet or a preacher. I only spoke, more vehemently than I should, out of the bitterness of my own heart. You say, sir, that the world seems to you all right. Perhaps you have not been called upon to experience its injustice, or to feel the despair caused by that injustice, so often and so deeply as I have."

"You interest me very much," said the pleasant-faced, blue-eyed man, turning for a moment to say a few words to two ladies sitting near him, then moving his chair directly to the youth's table. "I hope you will not think that I intended to pry into any sorrow or misfortune which may have made your life bitter for a time. But, as I

observed, your remark startled me — not so much by its emphasis as by the fact that I was thinking exactly the contrary of what you said. I was thinking, as we drove down here from the Jungfraublick half an hour ago, through the charming valley, so full of — of moonlight and — and peace, what a good and well-ordered world, on the whole, this world of ours has become, and what an amount of happiness there is in it for any one who is willing to take it. It is a very commonplace reflection, I suppose; but I believe it is very true, also. Still, I know that to-day there are whole classes of people who think as you do — that the world has gone wrong — and I always like to get at that point of view and see what it is like. This is the recess. The orchestra will not play again for ten minutes." He produced a silver-bound Russia leather cigar-case. "Will you smoke a cigar? They are excellent Havanas — not like the rubbish which they give you here."

"Thank you, I never use tobacco. Excuse me for changing the subject for a moment, but did you not speak as if you were staying at the Jungfraublick Hotel?"

"I am staying there; yes."

"Can you tell me whether Mr. Harrelston, the banker, is there at present? I saw his name in the list of foreign arrivals this evening, but ——"

"He is still at the hotel — that is — in fact — I am Mr. Harrelston," said the blue-eyed gentleman, a little stiffly, and unconsciously moving back his chair. Your great banker does not like to come into too close contact with the individual whose letters of introduction he has not seen, when that individual apparently wants something of him. He now regretted that he had been so hasty in addressing the young man, whose originality had tempted him to open a conversation in which he had not supposed that the easy etiquette of a watering-place would require any disclosure of identity.

The youth arose, and gravely took from his breast-pocket a small black case. From it he extracted a card, which he handed to the banker, saying —

"Perhaps you will allow me to call upon you to-morrow. I have some urgent ——"

"Oh, if it is a matter of business," said Mr. Harrelston, holding the card up so that the light could fall on it, "perhaps you would better write to our Mr. Wessels in Paris. I am resting at present, you understand — doctors allow no attention to details — you ——"

"Sir, I have come four thousand five hundred miles expressly to see you at once," answered the young man.

Mr. Harrelston moved his chair again, and was silent for a moment; then he read the name from the card slowly and thoughtfully.

"'Pleasant Merrinott.' I don't think I ever heard your name before. It is against my rules to see any one on business during my vacation, Mr. Merrinott. If I make an exception in your favour, it will be because I opened the conversation with you to-night. Four thousand five hundred miles! You must be from America. And a fellow-countryman of mine, I suppose?"

"No, sir," said the youth, rather grimly, and standing very erect. "I am an Indian."

CHAPTER II.

THE PROTEST.

Mr. Harrelston was seated at a desk in front of an open window, in his private room in the Jungfraublick Hotel, at eleven o'clock on the morning after his interview with Pleasant Merrinott in the Kursaal Garden. The banker had a map spread open before him, a pile of documents at his right hand, and two or three black morocco portfolios at his left. After studying the map intently for a few minutes, he leaned back in his chair, and looked out upon the mountain which arose not far away — a mass of dark blue at its base, and of tender green at its summit, which was crowned with delicate cloud wreaths.

He was more than ever inclined just then to cherish his conviction that, on the whole, the world is an excellent world, and that it cannot with truth be said that it is going wrong. "Even if at this moment I were to be overwhelmed by some great sorrow," he said, thinking aloud, as he often did when alone, "I should still regard the world as good enough. Happiness lies within our very grasp; all we have to do is to close our fingers. Men are the authors of their own miseries. If they would only move along naturally and at reasonable speed they would have no trouble. But some of them must find paths for themselves to the right and the left, and

the consequence is that they fall into traps and get hurt. Others are anxious to get ahead of the natural progress of events. No wonder that they come to grief. The true way is to take life as a blessing, as a grand, noble thing to enjoy and prize; to despise death; and to bear affliction with equanimity. I don't like pessimists. Neither do I believe in optimism. Safest in the middle, as my old partner used to say. He always repeated it in Latin, but that didn't make it any more truthful, I suppose. Now, what do people gain by going about thumping on tables, and declaring that human society is a fraud, and that it must all be built over from the bottom? It's absurd! I am half inclined to tell that young fellow so when he comes here to-day. An Indian? What kind of an Indian, I wonder? Perhaps he can tell me something about this rail ——"

Here Mr. Harrelston stopped short, and reflected for a moment. A grim smile irradiated his countenance.

"Of course; that's it," he resumed; "what a stupid ass I was not to have thought of that at once. He has heard of our proposed connection with this railroad, and he has been sent here to tell me something about it. Of course; that explains his stiffness! Hum! he's an enemy of the enterprise. Yes, yes; now it is all clear. Very well; we shall hear what he has to say when he comes at twelve o'clock."

The banker was about to bend over his map once more when a sparrow flew down to the sill of the window, uttered one or two impatient cries, saucily eyed Mr. Harrelston, then flew away to return a moment later in company with another, more shrill of voice and saucier than himself. Mr. Harrelston surveyed the new-comers with a look of comical consternation.

"Now we shall have no peace until the sparrows have been fed," he remarked. "Alice is not far off, and she

will make a fine mess of my maps and papers, unless I move them."

He arose and drew the desk to one side, and the chair after it, the sparrows not even deigning to move from the sill. They were evidently expecting a distribution of alms. While he was folding up papers and examining letters, there was a gentle knock at the door, and a soft voice said,

"Papa! may I come in?"

"There's Alice. Hum! no more work until four o'clock now; and if she knew I had been at it this morning she would scold me. Come in, daughter."

"Please open the door, papa. I have both hands full."

Mr. Harrelston hastened to comply with this request, and, as his daughter entered, holding a large loaf of bread in one hand and a prettily carved wooden box in the other, he stooped and kissed her gently on the forehead.

"How charmingly you are dressed this morning, *Cherie!*" said the father, with a note of loving admiration in his voice.

"Oh, papa, do you think you would really know if I were dressed entirely out of fashion? You dear old critic, I should not dare to wear this costume anywhere but here."

"Now, my child, you know that you chose it because it is bewitching, and because it will make those dowdy Prussian and Bavarian girls at the Kursaal green with envy."

"What an idea! As if I ever looked at that — that sort of girl!" And the daughter hastened across the room to the window-sill, where more than forty sparrows were now clamorously demanding their breakfast.

"Take this box, papa! I bought it for you to put your papers in. Only thirty francs; isn't it lovely? I want to buy a dozen to put bon-bons in on New Year's day. Do take it, or I shall drop it!" And as the banker

took the present; Miss Harrelston marshalled the birds, and strewed a line of bread-crumbs on the sill. "Now, greedy," she said to one tiny, slate-coloured wretch that seemed to take delight in preventing others from eating, "if you don't behave, you shall be banished. Papa, do see these three fighting for this large crumb! Oh, the little monsters! How they pick each other!"

She turned enthusiastically to him, her young eyes aflame with innocent delight, and her cheeks glowing. Her father put the box down on the map, and stood gazing almost reverently at her.

Alice Harrelston had a right to call herself an American girl, although she had never been in America in her life. Her father was born in Germany, had lived in the United States for twenty years, had grown to be a responsible member of a great New York banking firm, and had finally been sent to Paris as its resident partner and the manager of its branch house in that city. There he met and married a charming Philadelphia lady, and there Alice his daughter was born. Nineteen years had passed over the banker's head since he had first taken Alice as a baby in his arms, and during those nineteen years she had never been out of his sight more than two or three days at a time. The good banker had led a busy, uneventful life, rarely absent from his home unless some member of his family were with him. Prosperity had crowned all his efforts, and at fifty he possessed a handsome fortune, the reputation of a "business leader," a mansion on a fashionable boulevard, a country house on a cliff in Normandy, and an unsullied record. Clean-handed, clean-hearted, pure in his affections as a child, generous, loyal, Eric Harrelston was loved by his friends and thoroughly respected, as well as a little feared, by his competitors. His twenty years' residence in America, whither he had gone as a boy of fifteen, had stamped

him with the mark of the dauntless young nation. His habits of thought, his ambitions, were al. American.

Alice had inherited beauty from her mother, and a certain decided and independent expression of feature unlike that of any European woman showed that she was American. Her form was more rounded, her constitution was more robust, and her voice was lower and sweeter than those of American girls who have always lived in their own country. In the moist air of Northern France she had flourished like a rose on a bush that strikes deep root in generous soil; while in Philadelphia or Baltimore she would have grown up stately and fragile and delicate as a lily. Although her mother did not believe in the extreme timidity which French matrons display with regard to any independent action on the part of their daughters, she yet exercised closer supervision of Alice's comings and goings than girls in the United States are accustomed to, or would like to submit to. The result was that Alice knew but little of the world; her first winter in society had, oddly enough, displeased rather than dazzled her; and the verdict of the fashionable circle in which she was just beginning to move was that she was a lovely, unconventional, impulsive girl, but that she was not calculated to lead in social life. Alice certainly did not propose to lead, still less to follow; she had a mind of her own, manifested in dress as well as in speech. She had taken from the French their best traits, native grace and utter unconsciousness of self in deportment, and had not contracted their impatience and intolerance. She was vivacious, but not satirical; romantic in a certain degree, but not melancholy; was fond of devotion, but not exacting. The gallantry of American gentlemen seemed to her full of an exquisite refinement, slightly tinged with servility; the manner in which many American young girls received the homage of gentlemen

appeared to her to exact that servility, and to consider it a just tribute paid at the throne of beauty. She was intensely patriotic and national, notwithstanding her few criticisms of her countrymen and countrywomen. The atmosphere of Paris is cosmopolitan, and consequently Alice was not provincial in her likes or dislikes. American nationality, in its broadest and finest signification, was stamped upon her soul, and she needed only to be sent for a time to the United States to perfect the American ideas of education and female independence which she already possessed.

She was a pretty picture as she knelt in front of the window-sill to settle the dispute between the trio of quarrelsome sparrows, and as the soft Swiss sunshine fell upon her glossy braids of black hair and her sweet low brow — a brow such as poets love in women. There were great possibilities of passion in her face. The thin lips, the brilliant eyes, the olive cheeks bespoke both fire and endurance. She was not a woman to fade in a summer. So thought her father, and rejoiced in the thought as he looked down upon her. She was in perfect health, and health itself is wonderfully charming.

"Well, my love," said her father, "I leave you to finish your duty to the sparrows. I am going to walk for half an hour, and shall be back at twelve exactly, as I have an appointment at that time. Will you kindly leave the room in good order when this feathered gentry has retired? The desk, you know, belongs in front of the window."

"Yes, papa. And don't you like the wooden box?"

"It is very pretty."

"Papa, is — is your appointment with that strange gentleman to whom you were talking at the Kursaal last evening?"

"Yes, my love."

"Is he an American?"

"I—I really don't know," said Mr. Harrelston, as he closed the door behind him, a little annoyed that his daughter should betray any interest whatever in such an eccentric individual.

Punctually at twelve the banker returned, to find all traces of the sparrows' feast vanished, and his papers charmingly disarranged in various corners of the desk. The map had been carefully packed away at the bottom of the new wooden box.

"I wish I had told her to let my papers alone," soliloquized Mr. Harrelston, as he laboured to bring things once more into shape. He was spreading the map anew when a servant brought him a card on which was written, in compact, vigorous script—

"PLEASANT MERRINOTT."

"Show him in, if you please."

The servant did so, casting a surprised look at the young man, whose motions were quicker and freer than those of any person he had ever seen before.

Mr. Harrelston greeted his visitor with a cheerful smile, saying, "Well, Mr. Merrinott, does the world suit you any better this morning? Doesn't this bracing air drive all morbid meditations out of your head, and make you wish to live a thousand years?"

"Not exactly, sir; but I reckon I will have to own that my mood was rather ridiculous last night."

"Hum! No! It was all explained in the little conversation that we had. Now, Mr. Merrinott, kindly take a seat, and tell me what your business is. I went to Bellaggio, then came to Lucerne, and finally here, to get away from business; but I see it's impossible. I don't complain. You say you have come a long distance, and

I owe you some attention. We will come to the matter at once, if you please."

"I came, sir, from America to Paris to see you. They told me you were at Bellaggio. I went there. They told me there that you were in Lucerne. I went there; you had gone. It was by accident, after arriving here, that I learned of your presence in Interlaken. I felt it my duty to see you at once. I know it is an intrusion, but my errand is urgent."

"Go on, Mr. Merrinott."

"I see, sir," continued the new-comer, taking a chair, casting his hat carelessly on another, and speaking very clearly and distinctly, "that you have a map of the south-western portion of North America lying open before you."

"I have."

"And I see that a blue line has been drawn across a certain section of the map."

"Your observation is correct," said Mr. Harrelston, moving uneasily in his chair. He would have liked the young man to be a little more deferential.

"Across Missouri, Kansas, the Indian Nation, and Texas."

"You are right."

"It shows that I have not arrived a moment too soon."

"I hardly understand you."

"I will endeavour to make my meaning perfectly clear. Mr. Harrelston, I am a citizen of the Indian Nation, and a Cherokee. As you are probably aware, the country in which I and my people live is entirely separate and distinct from the United States, and our possession of it is guaranteed to us by solemn treaties."

"I am aware of the manner in which the Indian Territory was created."

"Very well. Perhaps you know, too, that an overwhelming majority of our people would, if required to

express their opinion on the subject, vote against any measures which should tend to make our territory part and parcel of the United States."

"Ah!"

"Yes, sir. I need not enter into the reasons for this feeling. Possibly you understand them as well as I do. Perhaps you would call them sentimental. They are, at any rate, clearly defined. The Indians inhabiting the so-called 'Indian Nation' are opposed to any movement or series of manœuvres tending toward their absorption into the United States, under territorial government, or in any other manner."

"Well," said Mr. Harrelston, taking up the map and folding it rather impatiently, "I know that the sentiment of a large class of the Indians is opposed to—to all kinds of progress, more especially railroads, because of a fear that the United States may swallow up the 'Nation,' as you call it. But there is also a very large class that is in favour of opening the Territory to all the advantages of civilization, and to joining fortunes with the United States."

"No, sir; no, sir," cried the young man excitedly, rising from his chair. "Excuse me, Mr. Harrelston, for insisting that you are mistaken in this matter. The mass of our people desire to remain entirely independent of the American Government, sir. They intend to insist upon their rights, sir. They have determined to make a vigorous effort at self-defence, sir. Now, Mr. Harrelston, allow me to state the case. Some recent acts of the United States Congress provide for two series of grants of land in the Indian Nation—of our land—which they have no right to grant, even conditionally, any more than they have to give away the land of the Shah of Persia. Yes, sir; it is an infamy, sir! The Congress grants our land, conditionally, to railroad companies, who are building

lines of travel through our country to connect together States of the American Union which lie on either side of us. The first of these grants were conditioned upon the voluntary consent of the Indians, which will never be given, sir, never! and therefore we may leave those out of the question. But the second, sir, are more dangerous. They are conditioned substantially upon two contingencies which may be forced on us by the arbitrary action of the United States Congress: the first, that our lands become the public lands of the United States by reversion or extinction of title; the second, that they be embraced within a State or Territory of the American Union."

Mr. Harrelston laid down the map, and listened intently. The young man walked nervously to and fro, as he continued —

"Yes, sir; this second series of conditional land grants is where the danger lies. Danger, sir, for *us*, for the Indians, who are as proud of their independent nationality as you are of yours! Suppose, sir, that Congress should pass a Territorial bill, throwing our lands within an organized Territory of the United States, and at the same time robbing us of the title of our land and vesting it in the United States, by special declaration, or *reversion*, through the extinction of our national autonomy. Well, sir, in that case millions of acres of our lands which would be required to fulfil the land grants would revert, in spite of our objections, to the railroad companies for whose benefit they were granted by Congress. And it is because we know, sir, that these railroad companies have mortgaged the entire lines, real and prospective, of their roads, and have filed the mortgages in the Interior Department at Washington, and have issued and sold, mainly in New York and Europe, millions of dollars' worth of bonds on these mortgages, — or, in other words, on the lands belonging to our people, which they propose to take away from us at

the first opportunity, that I have come here to see you to-day, sir, and to protest, sir, with all my might, against the further placing of these bonds in Europe! Why, sir, your sales can only be made valid after you have taken our lands away from us without our consent, for we will never consent! It is an infamy, sir, an infamy. Well, sir, a few words more. They told me at home that Mr. Harrelston was the man who had charge of the sale of the bonds in Europe; that his powerful connections and knowledge would enable him to place all the bonds, and so to hasten on the time when our lands are to be taken from us. Then, I said, 'I cannot think that Mr. Harrelston understands this matter, and I will go to Europe, and find him and lay the subject before him.' So I started at once. And here are my credentials."

"Credentials?" said Mr. Harrelston. "Why credentials? I see no occasion to doubt your sincerity, and your earnestness is very evident. Perhaps I might state the case rather differently, however. I am afraid you are not altogether impartial in your statement of the facts."

"Facts, sir! I have told you the truth!" He handed Mr. Harrelston a letter, which the banker opened and read.

"That paper," said the young man, slowly and with less heat than he had shown in his brief protest, "is signed by many of our prominent men in the Cherokee Nation. Some of them would, perhaps, be considered in other countries as humble and ignorant folks. But I know they are sincere, and I believe as they believe; so I promised them to bring their protest before you, and before all who may be instrumental, as you may perhaps be, without wishing to do so, in perpetrating a great injustice."

The letter was a brief authorization of Pleasant Merrinott to represent and to state the sentiments of a large number of persons whose names were signed in a long

line below. Some of the names were very curious. Mr. Harrelston read them one after another: "Cornelius Blackfox, Filex Redbird, Arch Sixkiller, Hurry Walkinstick, Scale Ragsdale, Sultuckee Charlie, Syneguvar, Stoning Deer, Garwalarkee, Fishinghawk Killerbill, Watts Johnson, Mix Water Mink, Ridder Sleepingman, Tee-cah-see-mu-Kee, Ezekiel Hair, John Bross, Stand-in-the-Water, Blue Trap, John Proctor," and a host of others.

"And these gentlemen have sent you to protest against any participation on my part in the sale of any class of bonds of the railway companies which have interests in your country, because they fear that it may result in the loss of their lands."

"Yes, sir."

The banker looked at the young man keenly as he handed him back the letter. After a little pause, he said, "Was it their idea, or yours?"

Pleasant Merrinott flushed. "Well, sir, it was mine," he answered; "but they gladly assented to it." He now spoke in a loud, excited manner. "And I hope, sir, that you will consider the protest as not without value. Our people will never consent to the absorption of their Territory into the United States, and ——"

"Excuse me, Mr. Merrinott; it seems to me that it is rather early to be certain of that."

"No, sir; they will never consent; they will fight first! Bear that in mind, sir; they will fight first! They have been driven enough, sir; they will make a stand! Any attempt to force them to unite their fortunes with an alien people which has always persecuted them would be an infamy — an infamy, sir!"

"Really, Mr. Merrinott ——"

"Sir, I have done my duty, and I will not intrude upon you any longer at present;" and he turned to pick up his hat.

Mr. Harrelston was a little vexed. He did not relish the dictatorial tone of his visitor, and he would have liked to ask him a few questions concerning the Territory and its future which he thought would embarrass him. While he was deciding whether or not he would ask the Indian to call again, he observed that Pleasant Merrinott was gazing steadfastly at a corner of the room, in which was a high pedestal, with a bronze Japanese dragon lolling upon it. Beside this pedestal, and so near that the dragon's breath might be fancied to fan her hair, stood Alice, with her hands filled with flowers. She had just entered through a door which communicated with the private dining-room in which the servants had spread the banker's family *déjeûner*, always served a few minutes before one o'clock. The young man seemed spell-bound; he gazed at the beautiful girl with undisguised admiration, and did not offer to stir. Mr. Harrelston stepped briskly in front of him, blotting out the vision with his compact form, and Pleasant Merrinott recovered his senses.

"Papa, I did not mean to intrude. I thought I should find you disengaged," said Alice. "Mr. Cliff has come to *déjeûner*. See what beautiful flowers he has brought us."

"Well, Mr. Harrelston," said the Indian, moving toward the door, "I hope you will overlook my warmth in this matter, and perhaps consider what I have said as not without some weight. And I will bid you good day."

"Since you are determined to go, Mr. Merrinott, before you give me a chance to state the case in a way rather dissimilar to your views, I must not keep you. But we shall meet again. Have I your address? Is it on the card?"

"I am at the Hotel du Pont. Good morning." He

made a bow, which Alice felt had been intended especially for her, and went out in his quick, graceful way.

"Well, I declare, I don't know whether to like or dislike that young fellow," said the banker, as he followed his daughter into the dining-room.

"What is his name, papa?" said Alice.

"Pleasant Merrinott. A mellifluous name for so earnest and stern a person."

"Pleasant Merrinott?" said a deep voice; and Mr. Cliff, a tall, elegant, slender man of forty, turned from the window out of which he had been looking, to join in the conversation. "Pleasant Merrinott? Why, he is a Cherokee — that is, partly so. Is *he* here?"

"He has been here this morning. Did you ever meet him when you were in the army?"

"Yes; I saw him at Fort Gibson, in the Indian Nation, when I was stationed there, the year before I resigned. He is an enthusiast. I'll tell you all about him presently."

"What long black hair he has," said Alice.

CHAPTER III.

PLEASANT MERRINOTT SEES A SHAWL.

PLEASANT MERRINOTT remained in the comparative seclusion of the Hotel du Pont for two whole days before he decided that it was his duty to call on the banker again. He was vaguely conscious that he had not made the proper impression. Mr. Harrelston had been so considerate, so calm, but, on the whole, so impenetrable, that the young Indian felt as if he had been trying to split open a glacier with a cambric needle. It was on the morning of the third day after the interview that he determined to go up to the Jungfraublick Hotel once more.

"Another conversation can do neither of us any harm," he thought; "and I should like to know what the banker means by saying that he can state the case in another manner."

Just as he was climbing the little hill on which the hotel stands, a carriage, drawn by two spirited black horses, came rolling rapidly toward him. He was a trifle surprised when he saw Mr. Harrelston beckoning to him from this carriage, and saying, in his cheery voice —

"Good morning, Mr. Merrinott. If you were coming to renew our conversation on the subject of — of your mission, jump in here beside me, and during an hour's ride we can learn to understand each other better. Will you come?"

Pleasant hesitated a moment. But the coachman had

reined up the horses, and the young Indian saw a rich shawl lying on one of the cushions. This delicate fabric reminded him of the beautiful girl whom he had seen standing near the Japanese bronze in Mr. Harrelston's room, and while he was thinking of her he found that he had put his foot on the carriage-step, and was about to spring in.

"You are right good," he managed to stammer as he sank back beside the banker. "A ride among these glorious mountains is a pleasure."

"Yes. The horses are wild for exercise, and we will drive up the valley toward Lauterbrunnen, and then return to the hotel for lunch. I am quite alone to-day, and shall be glad of company at my frugal meal. My wife and daughter have gone with some friends on an excursion to Meiringen, and I have just been to escort them to the boat on the Lake of Brienz. You know the Lake of Brienz — how placidly beautiful it is."

"It is charming," said Pleasant. His gaze fell on the shawl once more, and a shadow flitted over his face. "And the valley of Meiringen is a paradise on earth. But there are more beautiful paradises than even Meiringen in the Indian Nation, sir! Great valleys hemmed in on either side by mountains green to their very tops, and watered by streams more lovely, sir, than any that I have seen in Switzerland. And such luxuriance of vegetation and such game! Why, sir, when I was a child I rarely went into the woods without starting a deer. And what is there in the world more beautiful than a deer when he springs out of his cover and stands palpitating with fear and wounded dignity, staring at an intruder? What have they done with all the game in Switzerland? The country should be full of it."

The banker eyed Pleasant closely. The young man's enthusiasm was not assumed; it was natural and pleasing.

Mr. Harrelston felt that he liked the Indian when he was in this mood.

"Well, Mr. Merrinott," he said, "for a pessimist, it strikes me that you are gifted with a genuine love of nature. I know that your Territory is lovely; every one who has visited it says so. There was a gentleman at my table the other day, after you left, who has seen much of the section — a Mr. Cliff ——"

"Mr. Cliff? Colonel Cliff!" said the young man, contracting his thin lips and dilating his eyes so that the face was for a moment quite savage in expression.

"Yes; formerly of the army. I think he said that he had met — seen you — at — Fort Gibson."

"Ah! And I reckon he told you all the details of the circumstance — a personal difficulty — in which I was engaged in that vicinity, some time ago. Oh! you need have no hesitation in telling me."

"Mr. Cliff merely mentioned, I believe, that there was an encounter — a quarrel — in which you were interested, and that the troops were compelled to interfere."

"Compelled, sir? They had no business to interfere. That was the ground I took, and that was what brought me into conflict with Colonel Cliff. Now, sir, let me tell you in a few words what happened. There's an old feud between two powerful families in the Cherokee Nation. It sprang up more than half a century ago, before our people were pushed out of their homes in the south, and driven west of the Mississippi river. It is a feud, sir, that began in blood and will finish in blood. It began in injustice to my family, and in treachery to our nation. From time to time it breaks out into actual fighting, and lives are lost; and it will never be at an end until the wretched family that begun it has been exterminated."

"Exterminated, Mr. Merrinott! That is hardly a civilized manner of settling a difficulty!"

"Well, sir, I have not intimated that it *is* civilized. You forget," he added, with a certain bitterness in his tone, "that I am an Indian, and that the people of whom I am talking are Indians. I don't know that we have made up our minds to accept civilization as an unmixed blessing quite yet. We believe in justice, and our experience is that under civilization and law we don't always get justice."

"Well, really, Mr. Merrinott, I don't suppose you are prepared to say that law is not usually based on justice! And, right here, allow me, if you please, to ask one or two questions. What was the origin of the feud of which you speak? Was it not a difference of opinion as to the conduct of your nation? Was not the party to which you and yours are so bitterly opposed somewhat in favour of taking down the barriers which separate you from the rest of the world, and of dividing in severalty among the members of the various tribes the lands which are now held in common? Was there not a decided desire manifested by this family with which you and yours are at war — and by a good many people who believed as that family did — to see the Indians settle down into citizens of the American nation, and renounce their dream of maintaining an empire within an empire?"

The coachman was driving rapidly through the woods on the brow of the hill near the ruins of Unspunnen. The keen odours of leaf and twig, of mosses and flowers, which came from the aisles of the forest, delighted the young Indian. He was so absorbed in his enjoyment of them that he did not answer the banker for a minute or two. Presently he said —

"No; that was not the origin of the feud — not exactly. It began in a struggle for power at a time when both parties were agreed as to maintaining an eternal separation from the Americans, who were driving us westward, and would have been glad to drive us into the Pacific Ocean. But in course

of time the faction that began the feud added treachery to its other crimes, and it began to talk about yielding before the march of progress — in short, merging our country with the United States."

"Then you admit that there is a class of people in your country who are not averse to joining their fortunes to those of the United States? But you did not tell me so the other day, when you came to protest, on behalf of your friends, against any participation on my part in the sale of the railroad bonds, etc."

Pleasant winced. He looked up sharply at the banker, bit his lips, and then looked down again.

"What I *did* tell you, sir, is true, however," he said, at last. "All the efforts of a miserable minority to destroy our nationality will not succeed. Our lands cannot be taken from under our feet. We will fight first; we will exterminate traitors in our own midst; and we will resist any and all endeavours to drive us into becoming part and parcel of a nation that has persecuted us."

"Very good. I understand your protest perfectly; but I don't consider it as the protest of a whole people. Mr. Merrinott, you have been very plain with me; permit me to use the same liberty with you. By the way, where were you educated? You will excuse me for remarking that we are not accustomed to expect such ample evidences of education and refinement as you show from Indians in a frontier territory."

"My father, sir, was a decently educated man of mixed blood. My mother was a Cherokee woman, of pure race, and she, too, was far from ignorant. I learned a right smart bit at home, and was sent to a university in the Southern States. I left there recently."

"Then you believe in education, if not in all the other blessings of civilization? You have a sprinkling of the blood of the white race in your veins, and you have been

educated in the schools of that race; and yet you rejoice in the fact that you are an Indian and an alien, and you wish to remain such, and to maintain and perpetuate your independence, although your nation is directly in the track of modern progress, and — and — a dangerous obstacle to it!"

"Yes, sir; yes, sir! The process of fusion has gone far enough. It is time to stop it. We want to stop it. Or, to be more exact, we don't wish to be swallowed up and lost. And we don't propose to be swallowed."

Mr. Harrelston was now entirely of Mr. Cliff's opinion, that Pleasant Merrinott was "an enthusiast."

"I will not enter into discussion with you on that point, Mr. Merrinott. But as you have been good enough to come so far to see me, I wish to set you right on one important point. You are entirely mistaken in supposing that the bonds which have been sold in Europe in connection with these railroads running through your nation's territory have anything whatever to do with the conditional land grants made by Congress. In other words, and to put it more clearly, you do me and all who are connected with me gross injustice in supposing that we would lend ourselves in any shape or fashion to a scheme for selling your lands without the consent of the majority of your Nation, — from under your feet, as you call it. Why, sir, that is not the way in which we do business in Europe — at least, nowhere except at Frankfort. I don't know," he continued, crumpling up a newspaper which he had been holding in his hand, and brushing his forehead with it as if to drive away the flush of indignation which had mounted there, "how I should have received such an imputation on my good sense and honesty as — as was implied in that part of your protest, if you had made it in my business office. But you were probably impressed with the fact that it was true. Allow me to assure you that it was utterly false."

"I am very glad to hear you say so," said Pleasant, in a voice so different from that in which he had been speaking that the banker was astonished — "I am very glad to hear you say so."

He leaned back in his seat and said nothing more for some minutes. The spirited horses trotted briskly through the delicious valley of Unspunnen, past the ruined tower overgrown with vines, and, after an inspiriting ride among the green fields where the peasants were tossing the fragrant hay, the coachman turned towards home. As the carriage whirled around, a mischievous breeze caught in a fold of the shawl, at which Pleasant was again steadfastly gazing, and threw it to the banker's feet. Both the banker and Pleasant moved hastily to pick it up.

"How in the world," said Mr. Harrelston, "was that shawl left? I am sure Alice wished to take it. And although it has been lying here before me, I haven't noticed it until this minute. Probably Mr. Cliff was charged to take care of it and forgot it. He's a careless ——"

"Oh! Mr. Cliff has gone with your family to Meiringen, has he?" inquired Pleasant, leaning forward as if to examine the texture of the shawl.

"Yes. And the mention of his name reminds me to ask you if — if there was any one killed at the time of that Fort Gibson affair?"

Pleasant's face took on the savage scowl which the banker had already noticed there once or twice before.

"Killed?" he said. "Certainly. My brother was killed! He was shot dead, sir, by our enemies the Bluelots. That opened the feud again. We took the road to avenge his death, and we would have done it if the soldiers had not interfered, without the shadow of a right to do so, just at the wrong time for us."

"Indeed! Your brother was a victim, then? Colonel

Cliff did not tell me this. And are you not afraid that you will lose your own life some day in this — this barbarous warfare?"

"Afraid, sir? I don't think I know what that is."

"But there is no security for life, and no enjoyment of life, in a community where such things are possible. It seems to me that you are furnishing an excellent argument against your scheme for keeping the United States at bay. Certainly one of the advantages of union with the States would be a more settled society — more law and more order."

"But you forget again, sir," said Pleasant, in a tone which the banker tried in vain to analyze, "that we are Indians, and that perhaps we do not want law or order exactly as you desire and require them."

"Perhaps not. But I will tell you frankly, Mr. Merrinott, that what you have said leads me to believe that the maintenance of your nation as an independent power is not altogether desirable; that if it were merged in the United States you would all be better off. Why, all the land grants, conditional and others, ever made in connection with all the railroads which penetrate your Territory, form only an insignificant potato patch in comparison with the rest of your magnificent domain."

"That may be, sir; but we shall do our best to keep the American invader out of that domain as long as we can."

"I think we may now dismiss this subject until after *déjeûner*," said the banker. He was sure that he liked Pleasant better than on the day of the protest. He was even inclined to honour him for his sturdy independence. "Let us talk a little about Europe," he said. "I suppose you intend to remain long enough on this side of the ocean to see two or three countries. Surely you will not return at once to the Indian Nation?"

"I think," said Pleasant, "that I will walk for a few days longer in these mountains, and then that I will go to Paris by way of Geneva."

"A very wise resolve." Mr. Harrelston observed that Pleasant's eyes were fixed on Alice's shawl, and for some reason which he did not try to explain to himself he was glad that the young Indian was not likely to prolong his stay in Interlaken.

The carriage drew up in front of the hotel, and a servant came to help Mr. Harrelston to alight. When the banker was on the ground, the same servant offered his support to Pleasant, but the young Cherokee shot by him like a flash of light, astonishing him so that he stood looking after him for some moments.

Pleasant and the banker talked freely on many subjects over *déjeûner*, but carefully avoided any further reference to the railroad topic. The Cherokee was reasonably familiar with current literature, had a tolerably accurate idea of the condition of European politics, and was much better informed on American history than are most young men of the present day. It was clear, too, that he had read a good bit about the unfortunate peoples in Europe — the Hungarians, the Poles, the Slavs — and that he had formed clear judgments concerning them. "This man is not only an enthusiast," thought the banker; "he is a leader; and we shall hear of him again."

It was late in the afternoon when Pleasant returned to the Hotel du Pont. He called for writing materials, and wrote steadily until six o'clock, addressing his longest letter to "Cornelius Blackfox, Tahlequah, Cherokee Nation, Indian Territory, North America." Then he went to his room, packed his knapsack and swung it over his shoulder, and, returning to the garden, asked for his bill.

"But will Monsieur take no supper before he leaves?" stammered the waiter.

"Monsieur wants no supper. How far is it to Meiringen?"

"To Meiringen? Surely Monsieur is not going so far to-night?"

"Bring the bill, if you cannot answer the question."

"Meiringen? It is five hours' ride by a carriage. Does Monsieur think the diligence starts at night?"

"Bring the bill."

The bill was brought and paid, Pleasant failing to observe, in his haste to be gone, that the "addition" was wrong, that he was charged with two omnibuses, and that the day of the month on which this extraordinary document announced that he had arrived was the day on which he had left Bellaggio. He gave the waiter a silver coin, pushed open the garden gate, and was half-way across the bridge over the roaring Aar before the servant had said, "A lucky journey to you, sir; and may you come safely back."

Pleasant began to reflect after he was well out of Interlaken on the way to Brienz. It suddenly occurred to him that he was going to Meiringen because the banker had told him that Miss Alice Harrelston was there. But what was that to him? And might she not be miles away from Meiringen before he could arrive there? And — but he stopped thinking on that subject as he came down from the high hill, near the border of the lake; and fell to meditating, for the hundredth time since he had left the banker's breakfast-table, on the small impression which his "protest" appeared to have produced.

It seemed to him now not only as if he had been prodding a glacier with a needle, but as if the needle's point had been suddenly broken.

CHAPTER IV.

CARO AND HER MOTHER.

It was nearly ten o'clock when Pleasant reached the little town of Brienz. The moon had arisen, and the night was charming. The young Indian had begun his walk at a speed which astonished the belated cowherds and the old women with oaken buckets on their backs, as he strode past them in the uncertain twilight; but as the evening deepened, and cool scent of grasses came from the fields, and the moonlight made paths of silver on the lake, he relaxed his pace, and presently he began to loiter. The silence, the majestic outlines of the great mountains, the young winds that made merry among the weeds, delighted him. His blood ran riotously in his veins; he felt the inexpressible joy of living. Perhaps he would have forgotten that he was going to Meiringen, and would have lingered by the wayside until the sunlight came to drive the shadows out of the ravines, if he had not been startled by a jingling procession of tourists' carriages coming from Lucerne, the *coupés* filled with somewhat hilarious young gentlemen from America, singing a negro melody, and the interiors crowded with ladies, fretting because the long journey was not at an end.

"Is there no means of getting away from these travellers?" grumbled Pleasant, forgetting that he himself was a traveller. He felt a selfish desire to have the lake,

the valley, the guardian ranges, all for his own private delectation, as he might have had some vast and lonely quarter in his Indian Territory. These good people, with their songs and cigarette-smoke and fretfulness, annoyed him. So he began to walk rapidly again, and went on past ruined castles or churches perched high on rocks, through hamlets where the industrious wood-carvers were still bent over their benches, coaxing quaint or beautiful forms out of the stubborn blocks, and tracing delicate designs by the glimmer of candles; under a frowning ledge covered with mosses and clinging plants, among which moonbeams were playing; past a *cabaret*, where peasants were drinking and singing boisterous songs, which terminated in "whoops" not unlike those that Pleasant had heard in the wildest sections of his own "Nation;" past monster houses with acres of sloping roofs, and with dozens of tiny windows, and with pious mottoes written in Gothic text under their eaves; and at last came to Brienz, and sat down on the shore of the lake, in a garden almost exactly like that which he had so lately quitted at the Hotel du Pont.

A little maiden brought him a huge mug of beer, with a heavy leaden lid on it, and vanished without asking him a question. For how could any human being, even a foreigner, sit down in a public place in Switzerland without having something to drink beside him? Pleasant was not born thirsty, as Germans are; so he ignored the cooling draught, and glanced around the garden. Under the low branches of the trees a few belated villagers, with their wives sitting demurely beside them, were discussing crops and strangers — two never-failing subjects of interest for the Swiss. On one side of a long bowling alley a wooden William Tell was aiming an arrow at a wooden apple on the wooden head of his wooden son opposite. One or two boatmen, smoking porcelain pipes, were play-

ing lazily at bowls. The guardian of the public peace — a red-nosed personage in a blue uniform, with a sword buckled at his side — passed through the yard, and stared rather boldly at Pleasant's long hair and swarthy face. Pleasant returned the stare with interest and a scowl, and the guardian, who was a trifle unsteady on his pins because of innumerous potations of white wine, went on his winding way. Presently a fat landlord, in a braided jacket, followed by a lean wife in a costume composed of a velvet sack with silver ornaments, enormous white-linen sleeves, puffed and pinned back to her shoulders, and a short petticoat and coarse shoes, popped out from the inn to which the garden belonged, and began preparations for closing for the night. Pleasant called the Boniface, paid for his beer, set aside the host's entreaties that he would sleep at the inn, and went down to the border of the lake to enjoy a glimpse of the moon-swept expanse before leaving. A small boat, neatly covered with an awning, like those in use upon the Italian lakes, was approaching a landing close to the wall where Pleasant stood. The burly oarsmen soon brought it up to the foot of a flight of stone steps, and in another minute two female figures, enveloped in cloaks, and followed by one of the boatmen, carrying valises and packages, were in the hotel yard. The man set down the luggage and stretched forth his huge right hand, into which the taller of the women dropped several coins. He counted them, and immediately burst into a series of reproaches in wretched German, of which Pleasant did not understand a word, but the accent of which was unmistakable.

"There! Eight francs — six for us, and two for the baggage in your hand. Can't you see it? Wal, what are you scoldin' about?" said the tall woman.

The bold Swiss navigator appeared to grow angrier with every word that his passenger uttered. Once more

he indulged in a series of reproaches, in which guttural consonants and broad vowels seemed rushing wildly hither and yon in hopeless confusion.

"Wal, sputter away," remarked the tall woman. "Did you ever see such a critter, Caro? He said six francs for passage and two francs for baggage, and he's got it, and now he's madder 'n a hornet. I wish to gracious 't I understood him. I don't like to have a man sass me unless I can answer back!"

"Ma!"

This monosyllable was uttered by a sweet, rather plaintive voice, and indicated a certain amount of reproof. Pleasant understood at once that the new-comers were mother and daughter and Americans.

"I don't care," said the "Ma." "I ain't goin' to let any of these Swiss snub me. We've done as we agreed, haven't we?"

"Well, let us take up the valises and go along. We never shall get to Meiringen at this rate. Let the man stay there and scold. He won't dare to do anything else."

The mother accepted the daughter's advice, and stooped to take up the parcels; but the Swiss navigator pounced upon them, and grew more voluble and unintelligibly insolent than before.

"Let's leave him, ma," said the daughter, "and go and get a policeman, if there is such a thing in this sleepy old place. We can gain nothing by quarrelling with him."

"No! I won't stand it," said the older woman. "If he jabbers at me any more, I'll box his ears. He thinks jest because we're alone he can impose on us; but he'll find out!"

"Very well, ma; go on and make yourself ridiculous," said the plaintive voice. "I am going to try and find some one who speaks French, and get out of the difficulty. Perhaps I can get the landlord of the hotel over there."

The girl did not need to hunt for this worthy, for he appeared on the scene at that moment, and, without saluting the ladies, entered into an animated conversation with the angry boatman. Then he turned to the elderly lady, who stood towering above him like a prophetess of doom, with a severely deprecatory expression on her sharp features, and, addressing her in English, remarked—

"Dis man say he bring you from de Giessbach here."

"Wal, that's true enough, but whatever else he says is sure not to be true, I know, by the way he says it. You tell him we've paid him his six francs for passage and two francs for baggage, and that now if he doesn't let us alone we'll go and get a policeman."

"Excoos me, lady, de man say he tell you six francs each persown, and now you only has paid him for one persown."

"Oh, of course, ma; I knew there was a mistake. We misunderstood him; that was all. Do pay him, and let's go. What is the use of fretting about six francs more or less?"

"Caro, if this man hadn't sassed me so much, I would have done it; but now I WON'T. And he can make jest as much fuss as he likes. I won't be trod on!"

The elderly lady drew her cloak tightly around her, and looked defiantly at the boatman, who was rather sullenly awaiting the result of the explanation.

"He say it is de tariff, six francs each persown. I theenk you will have to pay it," observed Boniface.

This was evidently the daughter's opinion also, for she took out a little morocco portemonnaie, held it up so that the moonlight would fall on it, brought out three two-franc pieces, and handed them to the boatman, with the remark, "Now go and finish your scolding somewhere else." The man went away grumbling, without offering

thanks, while the mother protested vigorously, and called her daughter "a headstrong girl."

"Never mind, ma! time is more precious than money just now. I am afraid we shall arrive at Meiringen at a scandalously late hour if we don't go on at once. Can you get us a carriage for Meiringen?" she concluded, addressing the landlord.

"To Meiringen, lady? Yes, plenty carriages in de morning, but not now. You must stay here to-night. Will you have one room or two rooms?" He whistled, and a porter came running forward and began to gather up the luggage.

"But we don't wish to stay here to-night. We wish to go to Meiringen. It is only a little way; and we have been told that carriages can be had at almost any hour of the night."

"Oh, I assure — you — dat it is quite impossible. Dis way, if you please." And he grasped a valise and set out ponderously for the tavern door.

But suddenly he found his progress arrested by a tall man, with bronzed face and flowing hair, who looked down at him sternly, and said —

"How do you know it is impossible? You haven't even taken the trouble to inquire."

"My!" said the elderly lady, in a low voice, to her daughter, "that's an American, I know, by his voice."

"Do be quiet, ma!" said the daughter, in a whisper.

"Are you right sure that no carriages for Meiringen are to be had?" said Pleasant.

The landlord was greatly annoyed at this interference. His rage arose as speedily as the waves rise on a Swiss lake in a storm. And with his rage came a capacity to speak English which he had not yet displayed.

"Very well," he said, disdaining to answer the question about carriages. "If you are in charge of dese

ladies, perhaps you will be good enough to look deir luggage after yourself."

He dropped the valise at Pleasant's feet; his porter also threw down his load, and the gentle twain marched off to the tavern without once looking behind them.

Pleasant glared after them, but held his peace. He then took off his hat to the elderly lady, and said —

"Madam, if you will allow me to offer my services, I think I can find a carriage for Meiringen."

"Oh, you're very kind, but we shall be sorry to trouble you. You are an American, aren't you?"

"I am from America."

"Are you going our way?"

"Ma! how indiscreet!" murmured the daughter.

"Yes, I am going to Meiringen."

"Why — certainly — we might take a carriage. You think there is one to be had, don't you?"

Pleasant was quite sure that he heard the daughter whisper "*Mother!*" in an appealing manner.

He picked up the valises and packages without further introduction. "I reckon this landlord won't want us in his garden any longer," he said. "If you will allow me to suggest that you follow me to another tavern I think we can soon find a carriage."

"Thank you very much. I begin to believe that women can't travel alone in Europe as they do in America. I tell my daughter I think they try to impose on us because we are women. I should like to ketch any one doing that at home when I was around!"

The ladies followed Pleasant out of the garden and to another inn, where, in less than ten minutes, a deep-voiced Jehu was summoned into their presence. Yes, he had a zweispanner, a two-horse carriage, at the disposition of the ladies. He was anxious to return to Meiringen that night, as he expected to get a party for Lucerne

in the morning. So a bargain was made, happily free from misunderstandings, despite the defective French used by Jehu on the one part and by the young lady on the other part, and mother and daughter were soon seated in the vehicle, with their luggage stowed in the box behind.

"We must not go without thanking the gentleman, mother," said the daughter.

"Why, he's going with us, of course."

The daughter's mouth opened as if she intended to say "Ma!" once more, but was quite too astonished to do so. At last, after settling herself very far back in her corner, and drawing her cloak around her, she observed —

"You never are the same woman two days in succession. You wouldn't let Count Ferocky offer us his carriage, and accompany us from his mother's house in Geneva to the Hotel de la Paix, after I had sung at the old lady's party, and yet you will make the acquaintance of a wild-looking man with long hair, in a mountain village, in the middle of the night, and ride off along a lonesome road to Meiringen with him. I think it's inconsistent, that's all!"

The old lady's garments rustled. "You do, do you? Wal, now, Caro, let me tell you that your mother knows a heap more'n you do. This gentleman is an American, and that is the same thing as saying that there isn't the least impropriety in driving with him from here to Meiringen. Count Ferocky is an I-talian; and that is as much as to say —— Wal, at any rate, I don't propose to have the world say that he's payin' his attentions to any daughter of mine." Then, with a sudden tenderness in her voice, "*Do* wrap your throat up, Caro. Jest think how dreadful it would be if you should ketch another cold! Are you warm enough? Sh—h! Here he comes."

"And now, ladies," said Pleasant, appearing at the side of the carriage, and making a graceful bow, "I wish you a pleasant drive. Good evening."

"Oh — really, Mr. ——"

"Merrinott, ma'am."

"— Merrinott, we thought you were going to Meiringen."

"Quite true, ma'am; but I intend to walk, the air and the moonlight are so fine."

"To walk! Why, you won't get there before two o'clock in the morning, if it is as far as the driver says 'tis. There's plenty of room in our carriage, Mr. — Merrinott, if you haven't fully decided to walk," said the old lady.

"Very well, madam, if you will not consider it an intrusion."

"Certainly not," murmured Miss Caro, who felt that it was her turn to say something.

Pleasant took a seat facing the ladies, unstrapped his knapsack from his shapely shoulders, and said —

"It will be only an hour's drive with these good horses."

"How warm the air is!" said the mother. "But, Caro, you'll certainly ketch your death o' cold if you don't wrap up better. My daughter's terrible imprudent, Mr. Merrinott. I don't know what she would do if she hadn't a mother to take care of her."

Pleasant hardly knew what to say; but, after some reflection, he remarked that the mountain air was not very dangerous.

"No; but you see my daughter's studyin' for the operatic stage, and her voice has ben a good deal overworked, and she ketches cold easy. It sort o' discourages her morally when her voice is troubled. Don't it, Caro?"

The girl looked up quickly at her mother, with a shade of annoyance on her features. Pleasant thought that he could interpret the look as an appeal to be less confidential to the stranger. But the old lady went on —

"Have you ben over long, Mr. Merrinott?"

"Only a few weeks, madam."

"You're a fortunate man, I think. I know it'll be the proudest day of my life when I set foot on the ship that's to carry me back. I feel kind o' transplanted — out o' sorts — over here. I tell Caro Illinoy is good enough for me."

Pleasant laughed. It pleased him to hear the good woman talk. "I reckon you're right, madam," he said. "It's only natural that we should like our own country best."

"Are you from our part of America, Mr. Merrinott? Are you from the West?"

"I am from the Indian Territory, ma'am."

"I want to know. Are you — are you Injun?" she added, with a momentary tinge of distrust in her voice.

"Well, yes; I suppose I am."

"Let me see," continued the old lady, in reflective vein. "John Merlin, my husband's brother — our name's Merlin, as perhaps I might have told you before — John Merlin went out from Illinoy nigh on to twenty years ago; and I believe he settled in the Indian Territory for a while, as a kind of Government agent — down among the Choctaws, I think 'twas. Mebbe you've heard of him?"

"No; I reckon not. I am a Cherokee, and I happen never to have been among the Choctaws."

Here Pleasant became conscious that the daughter was scrutinizing him rather sharply with a pair of deep blue eyes. While Mrs. Merlin continued an account of her relative who had migrated to the Choctaws, Pleasant had time to observe that Miss Caro Merlin had a thin, sensitive face, full of a certain mournful beauty which was in striking contrast to the mother's prosaic and plain countenance. Miss Merlin's broad brow and frank blue eyes, her well-balanced chin and firm lips, gave the impression that she was a person of character. Her chestnut hair was not tortured into artificial curls, nor twisted into unsightly frizzled confusion, but was combed smoothly down

in the sweet and feminine fashion in which our mothers wore their tresses when they were young. This he noticed as she removed her bonnet and drew over her head a warm opera wrap, the ends of which she carefully wound about her throat.

"Do you find it cold?" he said. "The carriage top can be raised on each side, and we can close the windows, if you wish."

"Oh no!" answered the girl. "Thank you, but I think this moonlight is too lovely to part with for the sake of a little warmth. Isn't it heavenly out there?" And she waved her hand toward the valley beyond them.

In truth, it was a beautiful spectacle. The Aar, rushing merrily along in its narrow stone-bordered channel, shone in the moonlight like a silver band. The long grasses and the grain swayed with rhythmic voluptuousness under the caresses of the breezes. On the right the mighty, massive ledges affronted the sky, and cataracts, born of the far-away glaciers, leaped and frolicked and rioted and sang as they sprang recklessly down into the shadows below. Here a dizzy flood seemed to pause, shuddering, before it took its plunge; there a vast veil of spray hung from moss-grown rocks. On the left the Brunig rose abruptly; and miles distant, in front, were peaks tipped with eternal snow, upon which the moon now and then cast delicate tints of rose. Beneath a clump of trees the friendly lights of a cottage gleamed; from a field came the plaintive accents of a shepherd's song; and on the air lingered a delicate odour as of aromatic shrubs and freshly-plucked flowers.

"Look, mother! the mountains! the mountains! How white and ghostly they are!" cried Miss Caro, pointing to the massive and remote group.

"Why, daughter, you're as enthusiastic about nature as Alice Harrelston. She can't set still when she's talking about it. It's a sight to see her fidget over a mess of

flowers. She's got all the French ways of talkin' with her hands and eyes and shoulders—every nerve a-dancin'."

"Well, mother, do you think there's any harm in that? You certainly seem to take great interest in my lessons in acting, and you're always urging me to make gestures."

"Law, child, that's for opera, of course. You don't need such things in real life. Don't you think so, Mr. Merrinott?"

Mr. Merrinott was thinking of something else. These people knew the Harrelstons; they had spoken of the daughter; perhaps they were going to meet her now.

Mrs. Merlin did not seem to notice his inattention. She felt the necessity of talking, and so she continued, in a loud, sharp voice, which now and then made Miss Caro raise her eyes in appealing fashion. From her rapid remarks Pleasant soon gathered that she and her daughter were residing in Paris, where the young lady was pursuing her musical studies with much energy; that they were now making a brief tour in the mountains in order that the girl, who "was only eighteen, and delicate of her age," might get some new strength for her winter campaign; and that Mrs. Merlin held the French and Italians in unmitigated horror, and was anxious to finish with Europe and return to America as speedily as possible.

"The only place I've felt to home in sence I joined Caro over here," she said, "was up there to the Giessbach. Haven't you ben there? It's a beautiful place, high on the mountain, and the waterfall plashin' and cascadin' all the time. They light it up at night, and there's thousands of folks come to see it. But seems to me I like nature best without frills. Wal, there's one good thing; lots of Americans come there, and there's somebody to talk to. We didn't want to come away a bit, at least I didn't; but we had a pressin' invitation from Miss Harrelston, a

friend of ours from Paris, to join her in Meiringen, and to go to the — to the —— "

"Grimsel, mother," said Miss Caro.

"To the Grimsel with her and some friends to-morrow, and so we set out to come. But we couldn't get ready for the afternoon boat, and so we took a skiff across the lake, as you know. I don't know what we should 'a done if it hadn't ben for you."

Pleasant entreated her to ignore the obligation, and was in hopes that she would say something more about Alice Harrelston. But he was disappointed, for the rest of the way to Meiringen she talked of nothing but the inferiority of Swiss cooking and agriculture as compared with those of America. As for Miss Caro, she seemed contented with the beauty of the scenery.

It was very late when the driver cracked his whip at the door of the Hotel Reichenbach — a pretty hostelry outside the town — whither Miss Caro had told him to take them. But lights gleamed from the balcony, and the sound of music was heard.

"Who is playing Chopin, I wonder, at this time of night?" said Miss Caro.

"I suppose Alice retired hours ago," remarked the mother.

Then the landlord, and three porters, and a head-waiter, and a guide, came running out of the hall, to greet the arrivals, and Pleasant bade his new acquaintances good night, after having insisted upon paying one-half of the carriage hire.

"Wal, I must say that is the most civilized Injun I ever see," said the mother, as she followed her daughter up the stairs of the hotel.

CHAPTER V.

STANISLAS.

Pleasant sat down in the little room into which he had been ushered by a sleepy serving-maid, and began to wonder what he would do next. For the first time in his life he felt as if he were not his own master; as if some tyrannical fate pushed him on, compelled him, and made him its puppet. He did not feel the least inclination for sleep, and he would have been glad had the fate sent him out to wander in the moonlit valley. While he was musing, the music in the parlour below ceased; there was a merry hum of voices; and a few moments afterwards he heard a deferential knock at his door.

It was the landlord, smiling, with a lighted candle in his hand.

"Monsieur will pardon me," he said in English, "but was not Monsieur here the other day?"

Monsieur had, in fact, passed through Meiringen, stopping at the Reichenbach Hotel, and had found it a comfortable and agreeable inn.

The landlord made a low bow. "Then Monsieur will pardon the liberty that I take in inviting him to come down and hear the concert in the parlour. All the ladies and gentlemen are listening; some of the people who had gone to bed have got up again. Monsieur may not have

another such chance for years. If Monsieur will excuse ——"

Pleasant smiled. "Why, landlord, is the music so wonderful? Who is the musician?"

"It is the great Stanislas. He arrived this evening. He has been walking in the mountains for his health. The most extraordinary pianist of his time. The young English ladies staying in the house are quite wild with delight. Monsieur will perhaps come down. The ladies who came with Monsieur are acquainted with Stanislas. It is, I am sure, an honour for my hotel. Is Monsieur fond of music?"

And the great Boniface would have gone on practising English until the crack of doom, if Pleasant had not said, "Thank you; I will come in a few moments."

"Monsieur is very kind."

The landlord disappeared, and the young Indian, after a hasty toilet, went down stairs to see what this midnight concert was like. The tourists seated in the hall, at the entrance of the dining-room, and about the door of the diminutive apartment dignified with the appellation of "parlour," stared at the bronzed complexion and long black hair of the new-comer so boldly that they made him rather uncomfortable. He was fortunate enough to find a place close to the parlour entrance, and as he sat down a sharp voice said in his ear —

"I knew we warn't pushing through to Meiringen so fast for nothin', Mr. Merrinott. Jest think of our findin' Stanislas here! Ain't it splendid! Of course you know who he is — the greatest pianist! There's Caro talkin' to him now. My gracious! I hope them young Englishmen will get done starin' at her by-and-by. We've had Stanislas at our house in Paris; he plays for my daughter when he won't play for anybody else. I believe he'd cut his head right off to please Caro. There, Caro's going

back to set down by Miss Harrelston — and now Stanislas is goin' to play again. If he gets excited, he may keep us here till daylight."

Mrs. Merlin stopped short, for Pleasant had turned so quickly round upon her at the mention of Miss Harrelston's name that she was a little frightened; but after a moment's reflection she concluded that such sudden movements must be part of Indian manners, and she began again.

"No; he's fidgetin' with the piano keys now. And such a piano! I don't see how he can git any music at all out of it. I hope he won't take it into his head to have Caro sing. The poor girl is tired to death, and that would jest about finish her. That's Miss Harrelston settin' there in the corner with the knit white shawl on, and her mother's next to her. Real nice folks, they are. Never met them, did you?"

"I know Mr. Harrelston, slightly," said Pleasant.

"I want to know! Wal, you ought to know the family; they're the salt of the earth. I wonder who they've got with 'em."

At this moment the great Stanislas began to play again, and every voice was hushed. He played a *nocturne* so weird and quaint and full of plaintive refrains that it was as if he were interpreting the moonlight, or the waving of the grasses before the wind, or the murmurs of the pine trees in the forests on the mountain side. Under the subtle and inspiring touch of his white fingers the keys sang the burden of the night. Was it an improvisation, or was it some master's composition which this strange man had committed to memory? Pleasant did not know, nor did he care. The music exercised an electrical influence upon him, yet he was scarcely conscious that he heard it as he gazed into the parlour. He saw Alice Harrelston seated on a low chair, with Miss Caro at one side of her on a cushion. On the other side, bolt upright,

and looking as if he considered the music an intolerable bore, stood Colonel Cliff. Pleasant fixed his sharp eyes for an instant on that personage, and then tossed back his long black hair with an impatient gesture, as though he were driving away an unpleasant memory. He was presently a trifle confused to observe that Miss Caro was whispering to Miss Harrelston, concerning him, evidently, for they both glanced at him, and then returned to the sweet contemplations prompted by the music. A few English girls in travelling dresses, seated on a long sofa, listened ecstatically to Herr Stanislas; and one or two elderly gentlemen, in knickerbockers and holding in their hands white hats with blue veils on them, lent their ears with critical air.

The artist at the piano was a youth of twenty four or five years, tall and slender, with long arms, very white and tapering fingers, symmetrical features, and cheeks into which from time to time the blood mounted, almost immediately to recede, as if the pianist blushed at the fervour of his own inspiration. He was seated so that Pleasant saw his face in profile, and noted its statuesque grace; but from time to time, while idly following the fanciful measures of the *nocturne*, the musician turned the face fully round, and Pleasant noticed that the eyes were of a curious blue-black colour, and seemed to give out light as diamonds do. They were dangerous eyes, powerful to inflict woe; and although Pleasant could not fully express this thought, it nevertheless passed through his mind. A tender and gentle melancholy filled the face, as if it were the expression of a soul saddened by its vain endeavours to utter all the noble and beautiful sentiments which filled it; but when the white fingers, smiting the keys more sternly than usual, brought from the piano some stirring chord, the melancholy gave way to a kind of rude grandeur. Then Stanislas threw his chin up and his head

back, and without affectation seemed to be courting the caress of some invisible spirit upon his brow, which was broad, pale, and serene. If Pleasant had voiced the impression which Stanislas produced upon him, he would have said, "This is a great, but not a good young man. There is a savour of wickedness even in his inspiration. He is a consummate artist, but his art does not comfort; it charms, while it frightens; it has a touch of the supernatural in it."

A *nocturne* was scarcely appropriate, for it was half-past one o'clock in the morning when Herr Stanislas finished this "selection," as Mrs. Merlin called it, and leaned back in his chair, while the parlour and the halls rang with the applause of the delighted tourists. The head-waiter pushed his way through the crowd, bearing a silver salver on which was a foaming glass of champagne.

The player looked at it, smiled, and shook his head. "No, thank you," he said; "it would ruin the inspiration. Let me see," — and he passed his thin right hand once or twice over his forehead — "let me see if I can recall the melody that came to me as I stood in the mists, all alone on the peak, on the Grimsel yesterday. It was something like this:" — and he dashed his hands down on the keys, producing an imposing combination of harmonious chords, which gradually shaped themselves into rhythm.

Pleasant was amazed. The man's power began thoroughly to assert itself over him now; yet he felt like rebelling against it, like arising and getting out into the night, away from the bewitching sounds of the music. In the hope of diverting his attention entirely from the player he ventured to look up at Miss Harrelston, and was startled to find that her gaze was fixed intently on him. He was both delighted and pained. All his sensations were so new and composite that he did not comprehend them.

And now he saw that Colonel Cliff was aware of his presence, and was coldly staring at him through his eye-glasses. Pleasant endeavoured to avoid a recognition, but Colonel Cliff caught his eye and deliberately bowed. The young Cherokee returned the bow, looking into space as if he saw something extremely interesting a mile or two away, and then looked at Miss Harrelston. To his profound chagrin that pretty damsel was smiling as if she had read his secret thought and was very much amused at it. If she had known how the wild blood of the young Cherokee bounded in his veins with resentment for one instant, and then how ashamed he was a moment later for his lack of self-control, she would have been amazed, and possibly frightened.

"There!" ejaculated Mrs. Merlin, with that peculiar burr in her speech which betrays the Westerner, "now he's good for all night! Wild horses couldn't drag him away from that piano."

It seemed as if she were right. The musician, intoxicated with his thought, played on and on, regardless of time and people and everything except the current of melody which flowed through his magnificent improvisation. The vastness and sweetness of nature in her grandiose aspects were in this strange composition. Wandering tones expressed the roar of the cataracts, the booming of the avalanches, the whir of the winds on the borders of precipices. Into the body of the composition were wrought the perfumes of the hardy wild flowers, the glitter of the glaciers, the slow processions of the clouds, the splendour of the roseate sunsets seen over the peaks tipped with snow. Miss Caro listened with parted lips and quickened breathing. Herr Stanislas awoke a passionate longing for expression in her soul. She envied him almost bitterly for a moment. Tears stood in her eyes as he went on from exaltation to exaltation, now in his frenzy seizing upon a

theme and enriching it with a thousand variations, now leaving it with childish impatience for another, around which he lovingly wove vines and flowers, soft twitter of birds, and the melodious flow of brooklets. In the mind of each hearer he aroused sensations of which no one of them would have been capable at another time; he embodied their formless and floating thoughts, and sent them lightly hovering like spirits into the air. Even Colonel Cliff put aside his eye-glasses, sat down on a stool, and swung his hat helplessly backwards and forwards. The splendid enchantment of genius had for the time metamorphosed all these people into poets, and they were so exhilarated that they dreaded the cessation of the music and their own return into the solemn and sad-coloured world of reality.

He stopped suddenly, letting his hands rest on the piano as if he were unable from very weariness to lift them. The blood rose in a swift wave to his cheeks and brow. "Ah!" he said in French, and in a low voice which only those in the little parlour heard, "I am horribly fatigued! What nonsense I have been treating you to! My head swims! I think there is no air here. *Ciel!* Is that window open? One would not say so. Ah, my poor friends, I have wearied you!"

Mrs. Merlin arose with officious air. "Don't you think, Mr. Stanislas," she said in a loud voice, "that a cup of reel good strong tea would be about the very best thing you could possibly take now?"

The English girls began to titter, but they ceased when the player turned round, and with a radiant smile answered, in clear, staccato English —

"My dear Mrs. Merlin, you always interpret my desires. Ah! if you will but make the tea I will drink it with pleasure, for you know how to brew a heavenly beverage."

"Wal, I know you always take it when you come to

our house in Paris," said Mrs. Merlin, with a look of intense satisfaction in her face, after she had glared for a moment at the unhappy English girls.

"If Madame will step into the dining-room," said the landlord, rubbing his hands with glee, "hot water and tea shall be brought in a little minute, and Madame can make it to suit Herr Stanislas. What an honour! what a night for my house," he murmured, as he bustled away to give his orders.

"Oh, I grow each minute more tired!" said Stanislas, "as tired — as tired as these good ladies and gentlemen who have done me the honour to listen to my ravings. But we must not send them to bed with that nightmare symphony on their souls. *Allons!* Miss Caro, will you not sing them a ballad? — that little one that you sang the day of the picnic at Vincennes? How does it go: it is so pretty!" — and he felt out on the piano keys the simple burden of the song.

"Sing, Caro, once, please — unless you are too tired," said Miss Harrelston.

The tourists applauded as Miss Caro went forward to the piano, and standing beside the musician, sang, with much grace and simplicity, an English song. Stanislas accompanied the girl with infinite art, investing the ballad-music with a richness of which few had ever supposed it capable, and nodding his head approvingly. The girl's voice pleased every one, and the old gentlemen were profuse in their compliments. She listened demurely, but when Stanislas said, "Ah! my friends, one day you will be glad to say that you heard her sing to-night — for she will be famous," she turned toward him with a radiant smile, which made Pleasant, who was observing her closely, stare. Miss Caro was evidently very proud of the approval of Stanislas.

And now the company began to break up, with renewed

expressions of approval and thanks; and as Pleasant rose to make way for the English girls, he found Colonel Cliff standing beside him, and holding out his hand.

"How are you, Mr. Merrinott?" said the ex-army officer, in a cheery voice. Pleasant scowled but shook hands. "I heard that you called on Mr. Harrelston at Interlaken, and I should have called on you, but the ladies claimed me for this excursion. Glad to see you in Europe. This is better than the Nation, isn't it? Oh, I say, let by-gones be by-gones about that affair of ours, will you? I only did what I thought ——"

"Really, Colonel Cliff, sir, I don't think there is any occasion to allude ——"

"Oh, well, I couldn't let you cut each others' throats, you know. I always thought you misjudged me about that matter ——"

"Colonel Cliff, sir ——"

"Besides, I am not an army officer now, and I'm very glad of it, too. Dog's life, especially for an unmarried man. Honour bright—no ill feeling. Now, think of it—if I had allowed that feud to go on that night, you might not have been here to listen to this grand music. Come, I want to introduce you to Stanislas. Extraordinary man! Regular musical volcano. We are going to take a little supper with him after the mob has gone to bed. High intellectual dissipation this, eh? Will you come?"

Pleasant never knew why he yielded, unless it was because there was a chance that he might be introduced to Miss Harrelston. He longed to say "No" to Colonel Cliff, but he said —

"Well, sir, you are very kind; but I am afraid, sir, that I shall be out of place in your party. I am not very wise in music."

"Nonsense. Come along."

And, before Pleasant could object again, he had been

introduced to Stanislas, who wrung his hand, said he thought Indians were the only real Americans, and that they had been shamefully treated; that he would like to visit America, and meant to go there some day, and write a symphony describing the grand natural scenery; and a host of other pretty nothings which fairly took the young Cherokee's breath away.

"Mr. Merrinott is an old acquaintance of mine," said Colonel Cliff; "and I have taken the liberty of asking him to join us at supper."

"Oh, I am very glad!" said the musician enthusiastically.

"At breakfast you mean, I guess," said Mrs. Merlin, coming in. "Jest see if you dare look the clock in the face. Caro, I could 'a shook you when I heard you singin'! Don't you know how wicked it is to fly in the face of Providence that way? Didn't you come up here to rest? Wal, the tea's ready, and it's reel good, ef I did make it."

Pleasant was here dimly conscious that an elderly lady stood before him, with a young girl with brilliant eyes and olive cheeks beside her.

"Mrs. Harrelston, allow me to present Mr. Pleasant Merrinott," said the voice of Colonel Cliff. "Miss Alice Harrelston, Mr. Merrinott. And now, suppose we all go in to supper. The landlord has told me something about a cold chicken ——"

"Caro," said Mrs. Merlin, "don't you let me ketch you eatin' any supper. You may drink some tea, but ——"

"Ma!"

While Mrs. Harrelston was saying to Mr. Merrinott that she had heard her husband speak of him, and he was informing her that he had spent the previous afternoon with her husband, his eyes were fixed upon Alice. He would have been glad to remove his gaze, but he could not. It was a mercy that she dropped her fan. He

picked it up and handed it to her with the ceremonious gallantry which he had learned in "social assemblies" in the small Southern town where he was educated. His hand touched hers as she took the fan. Pleasant flushed deeply beneath his bronze mask, and looked so quickly and with such a light in his eyes at Alice that she turned away and began talking with Miss Caro. This made Pleasant's trouble all the greater, and he engaged desperately in conversation with Mrs. Harrelston, who was prepared, from her husband's description of him, to find him "original," and was a trifle disappointed at his studied and formal courtesy.

At the supper table he plucked up courage enough to address a few words to Miss Alice, who talked pleasantly with him about music, and chiefly of operas which he had never seen. The ladies stayed but a few minutes at table, however, protesting that the lateness of the hour was scandalous; and after they had gone and the musician and Colonel Cliff had lighted cigars, Pleasant felt that a great weariness had all at once fallen upon him. So he, too, pleaded fatigue, and stole away to bed. As he climbed the stairs to his room, it occurred to him that he now knew why fate had sent him to Meiringen.

CHAPTER VI.

ALICE HAS AN ADVENTURE.

ALICE awoke at noon, and found her mother standing at her bedside.

"Why, daughter," said Mrs. Harrelston, "what were you dreaming of? Something wonderfully exciting, I should judge! You are very much agitated."

The daughter blushed faintly, as with a deft motion of her round, white arm she pushed back the luxuriant masses of hair which had fallen about her shoulders.

"Is it very late, mamma?" she said.

"High noon; and we are waiting for you to take *déjeûner* with us. Come down as soon as you can."

Mrs. Harrelston retired, leaving Alice glad that her mother had not repeated her question about the dream. *Was* it a dream? It had seemed real enough for a few moments. She had dreamed that she was wandering with Pleasant Merrinott through a wild land, and that she was the means of saving him from a great danger. His dark face still floated before her as she made her hasty toilette, and ran down to join the company in the dining-room. She found Stanislas already at the piano, playing dreamy, sorrowful bits of Chopin, alternated with moody and gloomy compositions of his own. As she flitted past the parlour doorway he ran to join her.

"We are all here except the Indian," he said.

"Heaven knows where he has gone. The landlord tells me that he was off an hour or two after dawn, climbing the hills as if he were hunting for something that he had just lost. He is an original, is he not? And very interesting."

"I hope he hasn't gone for good," said Mrs. Merlin, who was pouring the coffee, and at the same time administering bits of advice to Caro, in a nasal undertone. "Don't eat so much butter, child; it'll spile your voice. I think Mr. Merrinott's reel amusin'; don't you, Mrs. Harrelston? Caro, do put away that horrid Dutch newspaper. You mustn't read while you eat."

Miss Caro laid aside her paper and her bread and butter, and folded her hands, while the rest of the company took seats. "If you will let me alone, ma," she observed, "I will take my breakfast here; if not, I shall claim Herr Stanislas as an escort, and go and eat in peace on the balcony."

"Oh no. The Indian has not gone for good," said Colonel Cliff. "His knapsack is still here, and he will be back in the evening. I overheard him telling the servant so. Upon my word, the fellow speaks very passable French."

"My! you ought to see him when he's mad!" remarked Mrs. Merlin. "When he saved us out of the clutches of that landlord down to Brienz he seemed to grow ten feet tall; didn't he, Caro?" And the good woman told the story of his benevolent interference, embellishing it to that extent that Pleasant appeared as a brave chevalier, devoted to the task of rescuing forlorn females from trouble and annoyance.

Caro was on the point of appealing with her customary "Ma!" a dozen times; but she observed that Alice listened intently, and something prompted her to let her mother continue her narrative.

"I must see more of him," said Stanislas. "We will walk together in the mountains, if he is not too proud."

"Oh! we hold you for the excursion to the Grimsel to-morrow," said Mrs. Harrelston. "I know that you have just come from there, but——"

"I shall gladly return in such charming company," said the musician.

"Perhaps we can persuade Mr. Merrinott to accompany us," said Colonel Cliff, bending forward and looking intently into his coffee-cup, "unless the ladies——"

"Unless we object?" said Mrs. Merlin. "How can we?" She looked at Mrs. Harrelston, who made no answer, but did not appear especially to disapprove of the Cherokee.

So the subject languished, and breakfast usurped the whole attention of the party, except Colonel Cliff, who was vaguely conscious that he had blundered in suggesting Pleasant for the excursion. He did not dislike the Indian, although he was quite sure that the Cherokee held him in abomination. But Colonel Cliff was uneasy because of Pleasant's arrival on the scene, and wished to make him declare his intentions as soon as possible.

"I wonder if I made an ass of myself in introducing the young featherhead to — to Alice last night?" he said, when he was alone with his cigar in the garden after breakfast. Colonel Cliff always thought of Miss Harrelston as "Alice," and fancied that he had a certain sort of protectorate over her, although he would not have dared to say so to any one. This grave man of forty, who had left the young wife whom he had known only for a year buried in a grave on a bleak hillside, near a frontier fort in Kansas, was beginning to recognize the fact that he was already intensely jealous of others who dared to solicit Miss Harrelston's favourable notice. "Confound the Indian!" he said; "he seems to throw a shadow

across my road. I wish one of his sudden impulses would take him back, post haste, to the 'Nation.' Perhaps it will."

But if Colonel Cliff could have read the mind of Pleasant Merrinott at that moment he would have despaired of any such hope. The Indian was determined to remain near Alice Harrelston for a time. Ever since he had seen her in her father's room at the Hotel Jungfraublick in Interlaken he had felt a strong desire to be where she was — to breathe the same air with her. Pleasant was a child of nature, and the great mother had brought him up to manhood pure, with all his feelings untainted, with his spirit unspotted. A city-bred man would have laughed at this young Cherokee's explanation of his emotions. Impulsive and passionate, the youth was capable of infinite suffering, and was doomed to be misunderstood by commonplace people. He had not been submitted to the excellent attrition of society in great towns, and did not realize that the chief art in life is to dissemble. He would not have thought of concealing the ardent admiration which he already felt for Alice if he had possessed the courage to speak to her about it. Nothing surprised him so much as that he had been timid and abashed in her presence.

He had slept but little, having been more excited than he had fancied possible by the weird music, and as soon as he had bathed and dressed he rambled away across the fields and climbed to the edges of precipices and peeped over the rocks until noon, when he found himself in a small village perched on a crag. There he made himself much at home until late in the afternoon, lunching at the house of an old peasant who did not understand a word that he said, but who seemed inclined to assent to everything that Pleasant alleged. He explored all the cottages, turned the heads of the

children by bestowing small pieces of money upon them, and at four o'clock began to think about returning to the Hotel Reichenbach. The children accompanied him down a steep path among the rocks, and into the main highway, which wound along the mountain to the vale of Meiringen.

Pleasant wandered over this road in half-bewildered mood. The exquisite purity of the air, the splendour of the sunlight, the deep greens of the foliage on the banks high above the route, the murmuring of the crystal waters as they stole out from the recesses in the rocks, the frightened cries of the little birds as they saw a sinister hawk sailing majestically in air above them, and the vast calm of the deep valley below him, thrilled his soul with delight. Once or twice he stopped suddenly as if trying to collect his scattered senses. He was comparing his mood on that particular afternoon with the wretched and discontented one into which he had fallen some time before his departure from America, and out of which he had fancied that he could never climb. What was the cause of these sudden lights and perfumes which had invaded his whole being? Surely the world was a good world and fair to look upon, and he felt almost ashamed of the despairing declaration which he had made in the Kursaal Garden, and which had been overheard by Mr. Harrelston. Was he not neglecting the business on which he had come abroad? Had he not forgotten the important character of his self-appointed mission? What was it his duty to do?

While he was thus questioning himself for the hundredth time, he found that he was approaching a comfortable-looking inn, over the central door of which was a sign bearing, in German text, these words—"The Chalet L'Ami." On a broad, green terrace a few feet above the road a group of waggoners were drinking red wine under the spreading boughs of an ancient tree; a fat and frowzy

landlord was watching the gambols of two puppies; and a baby, guarded by a little girl five or six years old, was dipping its hands in the clear water in a horse-trough, and laughing loudly at each splash and ripple.

Pleasant sat down in a tiny arbour which overlooked the valley, and the landlord came shuffling to him, and gave him a sharp look. Then he said, in English so bad as to be barely comprehensible, that there was a cave in the woods behind the chalet, and that no tourist failed to visit it. And what would the gentleman drink?

The young Indian ordered a pint of wine, paid for it, left it untouched on the table, and set out for the cave. As he followed the weedy path into a small patch of forest, a cool gust of wind smote his temples, and far off among the crags he heard a sound as of rumbling thunder. He fancied, too, that for an instant the sky grew quite dark.

Ten minutes of rapid walking brought him to a wooden portico, within which were one or two shaky seats, and from this point he could see that what the landlord had described as a cave was really an immensely long and very narrow cañon, at the bottom of which the river Aar was roaring with impatience to get down to the lakes. An earthy scent came up from this cañon, which seemed full of lurking shadows. "I will go into it presently," thought Pleasant, as he sat down and leaned his head, a trifle wearily, against the wooden railing. But before he had contemplated the yellow and green mosses on the rocks near him for two minutes, he fell asleep.

At that moment Alice Harrelston was seated on a rocky shelf at the bottom of the cañon, listening delightedly to the strange stories of gnomes and fairies told her by a diminutive guide, clad in homespun garments. She had left the hotel in company with Colonel Cliff for a stroll on the mountain road, and they had found their way together

into the cañon. Alice was so impressed with its weirdness and beauty that she had requested the good Colonel to return to the inn at Meiringen, order the carriage, and bring the other ladies to join her.

"Then we can drive down in the cool of the evening, after having seen the effect of sunset over the valley," she said. "I will remain here and talk with this mite of a guide until you come back."

Colonel Cliff would have obeyed had Alice ordered him to crawl on his hands and knees from the cañon to Interlaken. He set out at once, and had just turned a corner on the highway when Pleasant arrived at the Chalet L'Ami.

Alice knew the German language almost as well as English and French, but she found it somewhat difficult to follow the stories which the quaint little guide told her. In every sentence there was a barbarism which required explanation. But the boy, who was proud of his employment, and who fancied that his German was unexceptionable, sat with his feet curled up, like a Turk, at a respectful distance from Alice, and recited the legends which he had heard from the lips of the "oldest inhabitants" in the Hasli Thal. He told her that the gnomes, whose homes are in glittering palaces of gold and silver and crystal in the hearts of the mountains, once came to the valley to visit men, and that many a peasant, when trudging homeward with his kine, or when ploughing a field, had seen the merry dwarfs perched on a tree bough or on a rock near him. From that very grotto in which Alice was now sitting, the gnomes had often come up to the light of day, said the guide. Ay, and if the sons of men had not maltreated them and driven them away, they would come now as of old. The wicked peasants played tricks upon the innocent and friendly gnomes; they sawed the tree branches half in twain, so that when the dwarfs came to sit

upon them they would get a fall; and they strewed hot ashes on the rocks where the strange beings loved to disport. And when the gnomes saw these things, they lifted up their voices, and cried, "*O wie ist der Himmel so hoch und die untreue so gross —heute hieher und nimmermehr!*" ("How high are the heavens, how great is man's ingratitude! let us leave to-day, and nevermore return!") The peasants have never seen them since that mournful cry was uttered. Good little men were they; kindly to farmers who were kind to their beasts and honest with each other. The gnomes loved the chamois, and protected it from the hunter. "Ach!" said the guide, "my grandfather once told me of a hunter who was pulled over a precipice by a gnome, because he persisted in hunting the chamois after he had twice promised not to do so."

Miss Harrelston laughed merrily and long at the pale face and lowered voice of the boy, as he told her these legends of valley and cliff; but she started uneasily as a great shadow fell on the rock where they were sitting—a shadow so cold and dull that for an instant she almost expected to see a swarm of the friendly denizens of the underworld come out of it.

The guide jumped up. "There will be a storm in a few minutes," he said. "Perhaps the lady would like to return to the chalet?" And as he spoke, a long roll of thunder and vivid flashes of lightning came to confirm his prophecy. "It thundered a while ago, also," he added. "This is the second warning; we must make haste."

"Why? Is there any danger?" said Alice. "I think it would be grand to see a storm here. Can we not get some shelter under the edge of the rocks?"

"If the lady thinks that she will not be frightened—" said the mite, who admired Alice's courage. "But no; the wind is too strong. I think we shall have time to reach the chalet."

He helped her to leave the rocky shelf, and began springing lightly up the rude steps before her. Suddenly, with a thunder-burst like the report of hundreds of cannon, the storm swept down from the crags. The shadows grew so dense that Alice could scarcely see, and she stopped, trembling with fright, as the lightning darted its fierce flame into the recesses. The wind shrieked and raved at the top of the steep path leading out of the cañon, and a few broken branches from the trees above fell at her feet. Then came a crash so terrific that the boy turned and held out his hand to Alice, fearful lest she might make a misstep in the agitation caused by the grandeur of an Alpine storm.

"No, thank you," she said, pausing on a small hillock beside the path; "I can get on very well alone. Isn't the storm glorious? I wish you would roll one of those great stones down to the Aar; I should like to hear it rumble, and see it jump from point to point."

"If the lady will stand farther back I will do so," answered the boy. And a moment afterward a stone bounded by her and leaped recklessly along the declivity, awakening strange echoes as it passed.

"Ah! that is splendid!" cried the girl. "Roll one more, and then we will run for the chalet, for the rain is coming."

The mite obediently threw himself on his knees, and tugged stoutly at a stone which lay imbedded in the earth. While he was thus occupied a flash of lightning so startled Alice that she stepped down from the hillock and forward into the path. Then she heard a loud shout, and looked up to the enntrace of the cañon.

In unsettling the stone at which he was tugging, the boyish guide had loosened the supports of a huge boulder, and was horrified to see that it was toppling over, and in a moment would bound down the narrow pathway, sweep-

ing everything before it. He had but just time, by an adroit movement, to whirl himself to one side; and, glancing at Alice, he screamed with fright as he saw that she had stepped into the path. The immense stone turned over with a creak, and started remorselessly on its way, as the guide cried —

"Oh, *Herr Je!* what have I done? She will be killed! Take care! Step back!" And in his fear he threw himself on the ground, and shudderingly watched the dreadful mass as it moved downward into the shadows.

"Back! for your life! back!" shouted a louder and more resolute voice; and Alice, although confused and alarmed, obeyed it.

The mighty stone rushed past her as if it were a missile hurled from the hand of a Titan. She stood, blankly staring at it for a minute, until it disappeared, then, comprehending the danger which she had escaped, her strength gave way, and she sank down on the hillock in a dead faint.

The mite, pale with apprehension, ran to her, and was raising her, when he was swept away by a strong arm, and recoiled in terror from the apparition of a tall, dark-faced man, with long, flowing black hair, who gathered the girl up in his strong arms as if she were as light as a feather, and leaped quickly from rock to rock to the outer entrance of the cañon, where he disappeared. The mite's first thought was that a supernatural being had come to carry off the maiden; but presently he saw a broad-rimmed hat lying on the ground, and, concluding that the person who had dropped it in his haste must be human, he picked it up, and rather dejectedly made his way into the open air to restore it to its owner.

Pleasant had been awakened from his nap by the storm, and his first thought had been to take refuge in the cañon. As he stepped forward into the entrance, the

lightning had shown him the whole situation at a glance. He saw Alice, and divined her peril, for his quick eye detected the movement of the boulder before the guide had seen it. He had not thought it possible that she could escape unharmed, and even after he had borne her into the light, and had seated her on a bench under the wooden portico, he expected to see signs of some ugly wound. In his anxiety he threw himself on his knees before her, and violently pressed one of her hands to bring her to consciousness. Just then a gust of wind and rain passed through the valley, and the cool drops which fell upon the face of Alice revived her. She opened her eyes, and was naturally very much surprised to find the young Indian holding her hand and kneeling at her feet. A faint flush stole into her pale cheeks. She withdrew her hand hurriedly, and arose.

"I am glad you are better, Miss Harrelston," said Pleasant, speaking very fast, but not so rapidly that his words could keep time with the beating of his heart. "You had fainted. You must forgive me. I was trying to bring you back to life. I — well — I — you had a narrow escape from that rock. It was dreadful for a moment. It made my blood run cold. Can I — shall I — what can I do to help you? You must not stand here in the rain."

Alice pressed her hands to her forehead. She remembered now. "Was it you who shouted the first time?" she said, dreamily.

"Yes. I hope I didn't frighten you; but I — I was right alarmed myself."

"It was your shout that saved me," said Alice.

Pleasant's dark face was quite radiant for a moment; but it grew sombre again as Alice said —

"I don't know how to thank you, Mr. Merrinott. I was quite — quite dizzy down there. It was very foolish

of me to remain there, while Colonel Cliff returned to Meiringen for the other ladies. I — I think I will try to reach the chalet before the rain comes more heavily."

And looking around, she caught sight of the penitent mite, and motioned him to precede her. Pleasant stood aside to let her pass.

"I am sorry that I have no umbrella to offer you," he said. "But an umbrella in the Swiss mountains ——"

"Would seem like an insult to nature. Thank you very much again for your kindness, Mr. Merrinott." And she tripped quickly away through the wet grass, quite unlike a young woman who had fainted five minutes before.

The Indian stood gazing after her, and started half guiltily as she turned and held up one hand.

"Perhaps I may ask you not to mention my little adventure in the cave when — when you return to the hotel," she said. "My mother is very nervous, and it would shock her."

He bowed his obedience.

The rain was merciful, and Alice was able to reach the chalet without a drenching. As they were entering the yard, the mite, who had not ventured to speak before, observed —

"If it had not been for that black-looking gentleman, I don't know what would have happened. But he gave me a famous start. When he caught you up in his arms and ran out of the place, I thought that he was the ——"

"Caught — in his arms — you — you — little monster!" said Alice. "How dare you? Do you know what you are saying?"

He shrank away from her as if he feared her anger. But when she was comfortably seated in an arm-chair in the landlady's private room, and had instructed the hostess to inform her of the approach of her friends as

soon as they were in sight, she called the mite to her, and said —

"Now tell me how it happened, and everything exactly as it was — after — after I fainted, or I — I shall scold you for your carelessness."

And he was still telling her the story when it was announced that the carriage was in sight.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GENTLE SAVAGE.

Colonel Cliff came hurrying into the chalet, his manly face betraying real anxiety. The rain was now falling heavily, and the vast sheets of water were from time to time blown down the valley by a roaring wind.

"Are you drenched?" cried the Colonel, displaying a carriage blanket which he carried on one arm. "It was all my fault. I shall never forgive myself for leaving you there."

Alice looked up at him quickly, with a slight expression of vexation in her eyes. She thought she detected undue agitation in the Colonel's manner. It was not the first time that he had shown an extreme solicitude for her comfort, and she rightly interpreted it as the sign of an earnest affection. This filled her with a vague sense of alarm and disquiet. But she carefully concealed from him these sudden impressions, and answered, gaily —

"The storm has done me no harm, Colonel. This little man warned me in time, and we have been snugly ensconced here since the rain began."

She had warned the mite anew not to allude to her adventure in the cañon, and he had promised absolute secrecy. After she had taken his promise, she questioned herself as to her motive in doing so. Why should she

conceal so trivial an occurrence from her friends? What was it to them — or to her — that the young Indian was at hand to warn her of her danger? She would tell Caro. No, she would not! A blush stole into her cheek as she thought again and again of Pleasant Merrinott at her feet, holding her hand pressed in his, and the shock that she felt when she recovered from her unconsciousness and saw him! No! she could describe it to no one.

"Of course mamma did not come with you, as she saw that a storm was brewing," she said, taking the blanket from the Colonel's hand and throwing it over her pretty shoulders with a graceful gesture which he observed with adoring eyes.

"No. Your mamma had retired to her room, and we thought it best not to disturb her. But that good soul, Mrs. Merlin, is here."

"And Caro?"

"Bent over the piano with the Stanislas. Do you know, Miss Harrelston, that the musician has something sinister in his face? The more I see of him the more I am inclined to be afraid of him."

"How strange!" said Alice. "That is the feeling that I have. There are moments when he makes me shudder. I feel, when I am looking at him, just as I do in presence of some beautiful and noble wild animal that eyes me from behind the bars of its cage. I cannot help trembling. But I suppose we are very absurd, for I have always heard Herr Stanislas spoken of as a pattern of a man."

"That's it," remarked the Colonel dryly. "That's just it. He's too — too much of a pattern. Men of genius like Stanislas ought to have some grand irregularity — some safety-valve. He is like a volcano that has been slumbering a long time, but around the summit of which a menacing shimmer of fire always hovers. It would not do to say it to the Merlins, however ——"

"No: Caro worships him."

"Who's like a volcano?" said Mrs. Merlin, coming in at that moment. "Why, Alice dear, how your eyes shine! You hain't seen no ghosts up here in the mountains, have you? Jest look at the Colonel, letting his umbrella drip all over this clean floor! You can judge how it rains, Alice; we spiled that umbrel comin' from the carriage to the door. But it's goin' to break away. Yer mother's gone ter lie down, so we didn't tell her that you was up here, gettin' ketched in a storm. Caro's tied to the piano, with Stanislas a moonin' away over it wuss 'n last night; and you 'n' I won't stir from here till the rain stops,— will we, child?"

She sat down in an arm-chair, and, as if she expected no answer to her question, drew a bundle of crochet-work from her pocket, and began to occupy her nimble fingers with it. Colonel Cliff, after a few moments of conversation about the rain, left the room, saying that he would notify the ladies when the return to Meiringen was practicable. As his tall form disappeared, Mrs. Merlin laid down her work, looked up at Alice, who was standing at a window near her, and remarked —

"There goes one of the nicest men that ever lived. I never set eyes on him till last night, but I know he's jest as good as gold. American army officers always are gentlemen — leastways, I never see any that wasn't."

"Father thinks Colonel Cliff is a sterling man," said Alice. "Sterling is the highest complimentary adjective in father's vocabulary."

"Your father's right. The Colonel's the kind of a man, now, that would sacrifice himself, as easy as not, for anybody 't he was fond on. He's a model. But human natur's curious. There's Stanislas: he's jest as full of genius ez he can stick, but I don't believe he's trustworthy; yet he's twice as interestin' as the Colonel.

There's the Injun; no doubt he's a perfect pack of mischief, and can't control himself no more'n a wild beast can; but he's ever so much more interestin' than the Colonel. Don't you think so yourself?"

"Really, Mrs. Merlin, I hadn't thought of making such comparisons. And you say that you distrust Herr Stanislas? Why?"

"Instinct, my dear child, instinct. There's somethin' wrong about his natur', radically wrong; but we must look at the artist side of the crittur, I suppose. That's what I tell Caro. If I thought that she could be interested in him in any other way, I'd send him packin', mighty quick."

Mrs. Merlin's emphatic tone amused Alice. "Do you think Caro could learn to adore the man, rather than the artist?" she said.

"She can't," was the confident answer. "My daughter's wedded to her profession; nothing else can turn her head. You may be sure that she rates Stanislas jest right. You ask her some day, and you'll see! Mercy on us! what a crash!"

The two women shivered as a grand peal of thunder, heralded by a superb flash of lightning, echoed through the long valley. It was the storm's announcement of its departure. In a few minutes the rain had ceased, the vapours had arisen, and the sun came forth in splendour to flood the hills and valleys with light before he dropped below the western horizon, and retired for the night. Alice threw open the window and looked out on the green banks, jewelled with millions of rain-drops; on the stream, discoloured, swollen, and brawling, which rushed away to the plain as if alarmed by the neighbourhood of the turbulent mountains; and at the vast and stone-ribbed sides of the Brunig in the distance.

"I wonder where the Injun is about now?" said Mrs.

Merlin. "If he's in the mountains he's got a good duckin'; but I don't s'pose he'd mind it. He hain't ben seen at the house sence morning."

Alice turned from the window, laughing merrily. A picture of Pleasant in the cañon, huddling in a corner to escape the rain, and blown upon by melancholy winds, suddenly arose before her.

"What are you laughin' at — the Injun?" asked Caro's mother. "Why, there he is, now!" she added, rising and pointing to a tall figure passing with elastic step by the window.

She went out to the porch to meet him, but Alice did not follow her. In a few minutes Mrs. Merlin came back.

"He's dry as a bone," she said. "The Colonel asked him ef he'd ride down with us, but he said he'd ruther walk. Yes, he actually said ruther. He hasn't got much sense of gallantry. Said he'd ben promenadin' the hills all day, and liked it. He looks quite — quite poetic-like; mebbe he isn't so savage as we think he is."

"A gentle savage," said Alice. "What a fascinating study! But Colonel Cliff tells us that Mr. Merrinott is far from gentle when he is aroused." And she repeated to Mrs. Merlin the story which the Colonel had told her father and herself of the wild feud in which Pleasant had been engaged in the Indian Territory.

"Yes; wal —" said Mrs. Merlin, in philosophic vein, "I s'pose mebbe he's killed a man or two. Most folks down there have."

"Oh, *Mrs.* Merlin! how can you say such a horrible thing? If I thought that man's hands were stained with the blood of one of his fellow-creatures, I could never endure the sight of him again!"

She shuddered; and Mrs. Merlin felt that she had produced an unpleasant impression on the girl's mind. So she said, caressingly ——

"But, law! I don't know anything about it. The young man may be as pious as if he was studyin' for the ministry, for all I 't have heard to the contrary. I'm sure he treated me with the greatest attention. All I do say is that any man that kerries such eyes in his head as Mr. Merrinott does 'll need a mighty deal of tamin' before he settles down for good. Now you jest bear in mind what I tell you!"

His eyes? Alice remembered their varied expressions very well. When she had first seen him, in her father's room in Interlaken, his eyes had a wild, furious look, which she did not like, and which she had never before remarked in any other human being. But as she knew that the fierce blood of the Cherokees ran in Pleasant's veins, she thought she could understand what that look meant. It expressed the rage of a race that had been ill-treated, robbed, driven from one home in quest of another, and now fairly at bay. But the second time that she had met him, in the tiny parlour of the inn at Meiringen, his eyes glowed with a deep, intense passion of which she was not afraid, and which she instinctively respected. He had looked at her with the frankness, and, at the same time, with the timidity of a child. Then his eyes were, as Alice imagined his mother's might have been, filled with a languid and bewitching tenderness, behind which slumbered fires of anger and resentment. And the eyes of the man, as they gazed up at her in that one stirring moment when he was at her feet; ah! the eyes of the gentle savage were full of mysteries then — mysteries which Alice felt herself for the moment incompetent to fathom.

Colonel Cliff came to tell them that they might now venture abroad, and they drove slowly down the mountain-side in the splendour of the sunset. Alice was silent, and the Colonel, who always respected her moods, made no

attempt at conversation. Mrs. Merlin gossiped now and then, expecting no responses. Alice felt her heart filled with a strange happiness, for which she could assign no cause. Nature seemed to her to possess a new and deeper significance than ever before. The majestic mass of rock over which the Alpbach poured, and through the crevices of which it seemed to tear and rend its way, awoke in her soul the same sensations aroused by the stately resonance of harmonious chords of music. The beautiful plain, with the river winding along it, reminded her of the quiet close of some memorable symphony. She heard the melodious tinkling of cow-bells, and the deep, melancholy notes of an Alpine horn, and the rustle of rain-laden leaves on the bank, and the twitter of drenched birds saluting the grateful warmth of the departing sun, and the merry shouts of rosy-faced children playing by the brook's side—as if they were all parts of a grand refrain. Now and then a sigh rose to her lips, and tears stood in her eyes, as if she were strongly excited by the music of Nature. Everything pleased and contented her; the cottages under the spreading boughs of the ancient trees had seemed to her prosaic and rather gloomy as she walked up the mountain with Colonel Cliff; but now they appeared romantic and cool Arcadian retreats. The fable of the gnomes seemed real to her; she half expected to see weird little men peering from the hollows of the rocks, or vaulting from bough to bough in the trees. And all the time there was in her heart a strange longing for something indefinite, unknown, in the future, something which would make life a perpetual joy.

When they reached the hotel, the sun had disappeared, and the shadows had already settled over the village of Meiringen, and around the tower of its ancient church. At the Reichenbach Hotel silence reigned; Stanislas had evidently left the piano; and the guides had retired for

their evening meal. Suddenly out of this tranquillity arose a fresh and powerful young voice, a delicious soprano, that soared and hung in the sky, and seemed to make the very hills listen. Alice heard it with mute ecstasy; the Colonel lent a critical ear, and murmured two or three "Bravos!" but practical Mrs. Merlin lifted up her voice, and cried —

"Caro!"

"Yes, ma."

"What did the doctor tell you before we left Paris?"

"Not to sing. But it's no use; I can't help it. It worries me more than it rests me to keep silence. Stanislas thinks so too."

And Miss Caro came running down to meet them, singing as she came. "Don't scold, mother," she said. "I am so happy to-day that I can no more help singing than a bird can keep from flying."

"Wal, I'm glad we're goin' for a mountain excursion to-morrow, where there are no pianos," said the mother. "Your cheeks are flushed, and your nerves are a-dancin'. I declare I can't leave you a minnit. You'll be in a racin' fever, first thing I know!"

"The noble red man came in just ahead of you," said Caro to Alice, "and he is in the parlour doing the agreeable to your mother, who has got up with the headache that she went to rest with. I think he means to make her invite him for the excursion to-morrow."

This was said in a low voice, but Colonel Cliff overheard it, and made a wry face as he went upstairs.

Alice and Caro looked in at the parlour door, and found Pleasant standing bolt upright before the piano, talking in animated fashion to Mrs. Harrelston, who was laughing heartily, and whose headache seemed to have been momentarily dispelled. When he saw Alice his voice fell, and his ease of manner departed. She felt abashed and

nervous; for a moment it seemed to her almost wicked to keep their meeting at the cañon a secret from her mother and the others. But he greeted her presently, as if he had not seen her since the concert, and then sat down awkwardly, as if expecting her to say something. Caro came to the rescue.

"Our little party is all alone in the house to-night," she said. "The English and Americans, in gray ulsters, and yellow ulsters, and striped ulsters, are gone; the chattering French are gone. The landlord says the hotel is exclusively ours. Think of it! We are the only guests at the *table d'hôte*, and for us only the Reichenbach fall will be illuminated this evening."

"And charged in our bills as 'illumination,' one franc and fifty centimes each," responded Colonel Cliff, peeping in.

"Monster!" said Alice. "Don't spoil our fair young dream with your cynicism. How dare you mention francs and centimes in this happy Valley of Rasselas?"

"I hide my diminished head," said the Colonel, humbly.

"Now, Mr. Merrinott," exclaimed Mrs. Harrelston, "your story must not be spoiled because these merry folks have arrived. Please tell me some more about the peasants that you met in the village. I believe that you have really driven my headache away."

But Pleasant had forgotten how to be amusing. Alice absorbed his attention. The girl was not slow to perceive this, so she quietly left the parlour. The young Indian brought his story to a hasty conclusion, and gave Mrs. Merlin an opportunity, for which she was anxious, to talk about everything in general and nothing in particular until the dinner-bell rang.

Stanislas came to the table with an open letter, written on odd-looking green paper, in his hand.

"*Quel ennui!*" he said. "I had promised myself great pleasure in the excursion to the Grimsel to-morrow, but I must go to London at once. The wretch who manages my business arrangements has promised me for a grand concert at Lady Somebody's house early next week. Can you understand a Lady Somebody who has the taste to give a concert after Parliament has risen and all the fashionable world has gone grouse shooting? But I am the slave of my agent, and I must go. Will Mrs. Harrelston forgive me?"

Mrs. Harrelston said that she would, and expressed the conventional regrets. She was not fond of Stanislas, and the truth was that she saw his departure with pleasure.

"This wicked letter has followed me from Lucerne and found me out, although I took a roundabout course to get here so that no one should ——"

"Strike your trail," suggested Pleasant.

"— Succeed in following me and annoying me with business," concluded the musician. "*Allons!* let us dine; and, Miss Caro, I will give you, over the dessert, the advice which I had promised you for to-morrow."

The company was merry during dinner, and Pleasant was glad to receive an invitation from Mrs. Harrelston for the excursion to the Grimsel. He saw Alice looking gravely at him as he accepted, and this confused him so unaccountably that he upset the tiny cup of coffee which the servant had just placed before him.

"That is the first time we have seen him do anything really *gauche*," said Mrs. Harrelston to her daughter, when they were in their private room putting on their cloaks for the walk to the waterfall.

They found Stanislas standing beside a carriage when they came down to the gate of the little garden. "I have decided to go at once," he said. "This brave fellow returns to Interlaken with his team to-night, and I have

engaged him. I shall think out some new music as I ride along in the moonlight, for the moon will be up presently, but not soon enough to put out the mimic fires of your illumination. Good-bye, everybody! Mademoiselle Caro, I shall see you in Paris in December."

"Not until then?" cried Mrs. Merlin in dismay. "Why, you promised us a visit for the last of September."

"Alas! I am no longer my own master. Blame the wretch in London, Mrs. Merlin. For the next three months it is concerts — concerts — everywhere! And shall I take any message to Mr. Harrelston in Interlaken?"

He turned lightly to Alice, with his travelling cap in his hand.

"We have sent a letter to papa asking him to join us here," said Alice. "We think the air will do him good."

Pleasant, who was sitting on a wooden bench in the shadow of the garden palings, looked up hastily as he heard this. He wondered what Mr. Harrelston would say to him when he found him in the company of his wife and daughter.

Stanislas rolled away in his carriage, leaving the landlord bowing and scraping, and murmuring, "What an honour for my poor house!" Then a bell rang noisily, and Pleasant was surprised to find Miss Caro standing in front of him, saying —

"Mr. Merrinott, will you kindly give me your escort? That is the signal that the men have left for the falls with their lights. Come, ma." And Pleasant found himself walking along the darkened road between Mrs. Merlin and Caro.

They stopped on a small wooden bridge over the torrent not far from the hotel, and there Alice and her mother and Colonel Cliff joined them. They heard the roar of the Reichenbach fall, but could see nothing.

"It's more impressive when you can't see it," said the

Colonel. "The idea of burning blue lights in front of a Swiss mountain stream!"

"There!" cried Caro.

The mountain side was brilliantly lighted up; the Reichenbach sprang out of the blackness, and was seen leaping and foaming among the rocks. Now it was blood-red, now purple, now green, now violet, and at last intensely white. Then the lights went out.

"I like the darkness best," said Pleasant.

"Don't frown on the moon, Mr. Merrinott," remarked the Colonel. "For see — there she comes, peeping timidly over the horizon ——"

"As if she had heard you express your preference for the dark, and were half inclined to go back again," observed Caro.

"She is not afraid of me," said Pleasant. "She has been with me on many a hunting excursion at night, and has helped me through marshes and over hills. Come back here at midnight and see what she can do in the line of illumination. I reckon it would take a hundred million Roman candles to equal one of her beams."

"Oh! but you see the landlord couldn't charge for the moonlight, and he can for the candles," was Mrs. Merlin's remark. "Let's go in; I'm all of a shiver."

Caro managed adroitly to take possession of Colonel Cliff as they turned homeward, and to bring Alice and Pleasant together, leaving the two mothers to follow in the rear. The Indian offered his arm to Alice as if he feared that she would not take it, and stumbled against a stone in the road as he did so. Miss Harrelston was amused at his trepidation. It consoled her a trifle for her own, which she felt whenever she thought of the cañon and her adventure. As they approached the hotel her escort said, in a very low voice —

"You did not tell your mother?"

"No. Do you think I ought to do so?"

"Certainly not; that is—I reckon—what is your idea?"

"There is nothing to tell," she said, rather coldly. "The gentle savage is somewhat inquisitive," she thought.

Pleasant was so abashed by her answer that he said nothing else to her but "Good night," as they reached the hotel door.

When he went to bed, two hours later, his keen eyes caught sight of a folded paper lying in the corner of a stair. He picked it up, and examined it, by the dim candle-light, when he reached his room. It was a letter, written in French, and besides the date, at Berne, it contained these words only: "Dear Stanislas, Come at once. VERA." The words were scrawled in delicate feminine script, on singular-looking green paper.

The gentle savage smiled. "I should not have read this," he said to himself. "This is the letter which Mr. Stanislas had in his hand when he came to the dinner-table. In the hurry of going away he dropped it on the stairs. Now, how am I to get it to him again? It's odd. But perhaps his agent in London writes to him on green paper, too."

CHAPTER VIII.

A REPROOF FOR PLEASANT.

In the morning, when Pleasant awoke and saw the green-coloured letter lying on his dressing-table, he smiled again, and then he fell to wondering who "Vera" could be, and whether this were really the letter which Stanislas had held in his hand when he came to the *table d'hôte*. While musing, he heard a dull pattering sound on the roof of the porch just under his window, and, looking out, he observed that it was raining heavily. It was evident that there would be no excursion to the Grimsel that day. He was glad of it; perhaps he would have a chance to be near Alice, to hear her speak, to note the faint red which came into her cheeks when she was engaged in animated conversation or as she listened intently, and to rest his eyes on the sweet, low brow, crowned with the black and glossy hair. The great mists which came sweeping through the valley, blotting out the fields and trees and cottages, and seeming to leave the little inn floating among the clouds, pleased him, and he could have thanked them. It was yet early, but he dressed hastily, and after putting the green letter carefully away in a corner of his knapsack, he went downstairs. No one was astir; not even the correct and usually punctual head-waiter showed his white and fatigued face.

Pleasant paced the corridor for half an hour, at the end of which time there was a lull in the down-pouring rain. He ran up to his room, came down again with some towels over his arm, and went away into the mist, striding along like the hardy forester that he was. He climbed to a secluded nook in the mountains, where a small pool under the shadow of some great rocks was formed by a torrent which found its impetuous course checked by rocky barriers. There he stripped off his garments and plunged into the cold, foamy water. Ten minutes later he stood, a bronze demi-god, naked and dripping, on a rock, with the mists circling about him. He was so absorbed in thought that he narrowly escaped walking down to the hotel in the primitive condition in which he had left the water: — he had quite forgotten his clothes. But presently the cold wind on his shoulders reminded him of his nudity, and he made himself once more presentable, thinking, as he dressed and tried to dry his long hair; thinking, as he tied a negligent knot in the loose cravat at his throat; thinking so hard, as he pulled on his shoes, that he sat for some minutes with one of them half on, with his fingers in the straps and his body bent double. Pleasant was making up his mind for a course of action which he feared he might regret. By the time he had descended the steep path to the hotel he was pretty fully resolved, and the firmness of his decision was visible in his eyes.

"My! look at the Injun, bareheaded, with his hair streamin' down his back, comin' into the garden," cried Mrs. Merlin from the parlour to the girls, who, merry and mutinous after a night's refreshing sleep, came running to the window to see if Pleasant answered to the description. "Wal, I must say that he does love to tramp around in the rain!" she added; but she had no time for further criticism, for he was at the parlour door before they could retreat.

"Why, Mr. Merrinott, you are abroad early!" said Caro. "Were you out in the rain?" She observed that his hair was wet, and in his hurried toilet at the torrent he had thrown it back from his forehead in a manner which gave his face a new expression — fiercer than usual.

"In the rain?" he answered gaily. "I have been in the creek, the *bach*, the stream up yonder;" and he pointed to the hills. "It was delightful. When I was quite alone there, with the clouds all around me, and the water dashing over me, I felt as if I were the first man; as if the world were all primitive and savage as yet; as if there were no clothes, no firearms, no railroads, no laws; and as if I should come out of my bath, get warm by vigorous exercise, and proceed to hunt my breakfast with a stone for a weapon, as my ancestors did! It was a great sensation!"

Caro was puzzled. She blushed, and threw out a distress signal to Alice, who was also disturbed by this odd burst of enthusiasm, which she hardly knew whether to regard as ludicrous or fine. Mrs. Merlin spared them by remarking —

"Most likely you ketched cold. Takin' baths in the open air in the rain ain't over-conducive to health. But perhaps you're used to it at home, Mr. Merrinott?"

"Oh yes; indeed, I am never afraid of the water, whether it falls from the sky, or over a precipice, or flows in a deep channel. But I once got into a river sooner than I expected to, and — now I think of it — I reckon I was right startled for a minute or two."

He sat down on the sofa, and, dropping his hat carelessly beside him, seemed inclined for conversation.

"Oh, was it an adventure, Mr. Merrinott? If it was, please tell us about it," said Caro, recovering courage, and glancing at Alice, who seemed at first disposed to

leave the room, but who sat down on the piano stool the moment that Pleasant began to speak again.

"An adventure? Yes, it was an adventure, right stirring, for a short time. My brother was in it — my brother who is dead." His brow clouded and his eyes flashed. The two girls looked up quickly at him, for his voice had betrayed strong emotion. "I suppose you know that the country I live in is but thinly settled, wild, full of game—a paradise for hunters. Some years ago my brother and I, with five or six of our neighbours, were returning from a hunting excursion, and I reckon 'twas about six or seven in the morning when we came to the Grand River, at the ferry opposite Fort Gibson. It was in January; there had been a cold spell, succeeded by a thaw, and the ice in the stream was breaking up, and making for the Arkansas, into which the Grand empties, not far below the fort. It was a noble sight to see the great cakes of ice jumping up and down and knocking together, or thumping against the banks. We signalled the ferryman to come over, but he didn't seem inclined to make the attempt. The ferry-boat is a barge attached to a cable stretched across the river by ropes fitted with pulleys, so that they run along the cable when the barge is poled back and forth. The current is right powerful, and the ferryman, thinking of that and of the ice, hung back. But we were anxious to get home, and couldn't afford to wait his pleasure, so we paraded our horses up and down, fired off our revolvers, and shouted, but all in vain. Just as we were making a final effort, seven of the Bluelots rode up. Their arrival set us to thinking of a right smart lot of things besides getting over the ferry."

"Why?" inquired Mrs. Merlin.

"The Bluelots are a family of half-breed Indians, who have had a feud with my family ever since we were all children. Our fathers were enemies before us. I am

afraid that this is not a proper thing for ladies to hear; but the Bluelots and the Merrinotts have been fighting each other so long that whenever any representatives of the two names meet blood is right certain to flow."

"It is horrible — wicked," said Alice, rising and looking at the young Indian with indignation in her eyes. "It isn't civilized."

"Quite true; but it is — Indian."

"Please go on," said Caro.

"Well, the Bluelots, like ourselves, had been hunting; the two brothers each had a deer hung over his horse's back, and their five sons were not empty-handed. When they rode up and saw us the brothers gave a start, and began to mutter to their sons. We didn't exactly want any disturbance, for we were anxious to get home, and my brother and I, being the only Merrinotts in our party, didn't feel strong enough to meet the seven. The oldest of the Bluelot brothers by-and-by burst out laughing, and he said, in Cherokee, to his partner, 'What strange company we meet, when we get up early in the morning.' Then the whole seven laughed, and my brother put his hand on his revolver, but he thought twice, and didn't draw it, for just then he saw the ferryman put off and try to get across to us, tempted by the additional number of passengers who had arrived.

"After a powerful deal of trouble and some danger the old barge swung up to the bank, and the Bluelot brothers and their sons rode down to it ahead of us. We made no objection, because we didn't want to involve the hunters with us in a difficulty. There was no end of work in getting the horses, and the dogs, and the dead deer aboard, but when we did get untangled, and the ferryman pushed off, we found the seven Bluelots on one side of the barge, and our party — we were only six — on the other. Even the horses seemed to separate by instinct,

and the Bluelot dogs showed their teeth at the Merrinott dogs. But the Bluelot brothers laughed, and their laugh was worse than the dogs' barking.

"The river was running mighty high, and the ferryman had all he could do to keep the barge moving. 'If the cable snaps, boys,' he said, 'we'll all go waltzing down to the Arkansas River,' as we seemed likely to do at any minute. The soldiers came out from the fort and looked on with interest. All at once the ferryman cried to us to pick up some of the long poles lying in the bottom of the barge, and to help push past a great ice-cake that looked ugly. We all took hold then, for we saw that we were in danger, and the Bluelots were working alongside of us before we knew it. After a little time we got past the cake, and threw down the poles. One of the Bluelot boys managed to drop the heavy end of his pole so that it fell on one of my brother's feet.

"My brother jumped into the middle of the barge floor. 'You black-looking scoundrel,' said he to the Bluelot boy, 'I'll teach you to drop poles on me;' and there were six or eight revolvers out in a second. I stood up beside my brother, when the father of the Bluelot boy who had made the trouble reached at me and caught me up — I was not full-grown then. He gripped me hard and fast, — I reckon he held me out at arm's length — and he said, 'We don't want any children interfering in this fight. I'll put you into the water;' and the next minute I was splashing in the Grand River, and grasping at the slippery sides of an ice-cake."

Mrs. Merlin laughed; Caro wore a critical look; but Alice seemed deeply shocked and offended. She glanced impatiently at the Indian, as he continued his story after a short pause.

"Of course I was right startled, but I was so mortified and so angry that my fall didn't hurt me any. There was

a lump of ice, though, half as large as a log cabin, which ran over me, and scraped me so hard that I fainted dead away. When I recovered my senses, I was lying on the bank, and the old ferryman was pouring liquor down my throat. A couple of soldiers from the fort had brought down some blankets, and I was covered up to the chin. 'Who got me out?' I said. 'Your brother Elias,' answered the ferryman. 'He fired two shots, and then he leapt in after ye. He's gone off home for help, for he's afraid the Bluelots may come back.' 'Are they whipped?' I said. 'They are. Two of them are dead as stones — two of the sons. The folks that was with ye turned in, and said they wouldn't 'low no foolin' round men they'd been huntin' with, and they helped Elias clean out the Bluelots. Yer brother's the bravest man in the Cherokee Nation, but he can't fight seven half-breeds.' The old ferryman's English sounded good to me when he told me these things, but not so good as Elias's Cherokee language did when he came back an hour afterward and told me all the details of the story. Well, when I got warm once more I mounted a horse and rode home, and that was all. I only mentioned it because I happened to think of my involuntary bath in the Grand River."

"But the two men that were killed — who — who — shot them?" said Alice, with a strange anxiety in her voice.

"My brother never told me that," answered Pleasant. "It would be difficult to say, because it was a general fight. But just two years afterward my brother was killed by the Bluelots. The account is still open."

"What a nightmare story you have told us, Mr. Merrinott!" said Caro, sitting down on the piano stool, from which Alice had moved away to the door. "Mercy! what a picture! I can see the Grand River running rapidly, with the ice-blocks bounding up and down, and

the ferry-boat toiling across, and the fight in progress. If Stanislas were here he would make a symphony of it."

"And Mr. Merrinott spinnin' through the air and fallin' plump into the water!" said Mrs. Merlin. "I should like to see Stanislas put that in his symphony."

"Really, Mrs. Merlin," said Alice, "I can see nothing laughable in this story. It seems to me full of horror. Tell me, Mr. Merrinott, is that the kind of life which you lead in the Indian Nation?"

Pleasant rose and took up his hat. The frown had vanished from his face, and there was an expression of deep regret in his eyes. "I can see, Miss Harrelston," he said, humbly, "that my story has offended you. I am right sorry, and I hope that you will forgive me. You cannot regret my error more than I do. I am afraid that I am not a companion for ladies. Yes, there are feuds on the border, and I reckon there always will be. They are legacies that we are forced to accept, and we grow to consider them as matter-of-fact."

"Legacies which can bring only sorrow, bitterness, shame, and despair," said the girl.

Pleasant looked down at the floor. Alice's words were full of reproof meant for him.

"There is one thing which I ought to tell you!" he said. "Justice and right in this feud are on our side — on my side. The Bluelots are the head and front of the party which wishes to give up our independence as a nation, and to become part of the population of the United States. They are traitors, and they have carried on war against my family for years because we have dared to tell them that they are guilty of treason, and have been successful in checkmating their plans. There is no way of settling the dispute with them except by exterminating them!"

"No way?" said Miss Harrelston. Her cheeks were flushed now, and she came back from the parlour entrance

to the middle of the room, and spoke so quickly and earnestly that Pleasant recoiled a step or two. "Do you mean to say that there is no virtue in persuasion — in arbitration — in eloquence — that can keep the members of two families from flying at each other's throats every time that they meet because they disagree on a question about land? No way? Mr. Merrinott, would you make us think that you are savages?"

"I believe that is what we are generally called," answered Pleasant, coldly. He was sorry now that he had entered the parlour. Alice alarmed him; he felt that if he allowed himself to be drawn into a discussion with her she would place his conduct in such a light that he himself could not approve of it. But he approved of *her* — most emphatically — although she was judging him harshly. He thought that he had never seen a more lovely creature than Alice Harrelston was, as she stood before him with her face brilliant with excitement. "Let me ask you once more to excuse me for introducing the subject," he said.

"Mr. Merrinott," said Alice, "did you ever kill a human being?"

The question was so abrupt that Mrs. Merlin and Caro looked at the girl in astonishment, and for a moment seemed to think her almost guilty of unmaidenly forwardness in persecuting the unlucky Pleasant, who was now thoroughly ill at ease. Had they known the tremendous effort which it cost Alice to ask the question, and her real motive in asking it, their respect for her would have been increased an hundredfold.

"Never," answered Pleasant; "I have once or twice been obliged to defend myself, but I have never taken a life. But I will not deceive you. When my poor brother was killed — as Colonel Cliff has probably told you — I did my best to ——"

"Hush-sh," said Mrs. Merlin. "Alice, here comes your mother. I don't think that it would do her any good to know what we've ben talkin' about. Mr. Merrinott, don't look so gloomy. Caro, can't you play a tune with some go to it? And s'pose we talk about somethin' better 'n murders at the breakfast-table."

Caro dashed recklessly into the mazes of the Künstlerleben Waltz," and Mrs. Harrelston, when she came in, fancied that they had all been discussing Strauss.

"No excursion for us to-day," she said. "The world seems drowned. I think the hotel will float away presently. And, Alice, here is a letter from your father ——"

"Who can't come, of course. I wonder if the dear old father remembers that this is the first time I was ever out of his sight for three consecutive days."

"No, he cannot come. He has been summoned suddenly to Paris; the despatch had reached him before our letter arrived. He begs us to return home as soon ——"

"As convenient, and remains ever — I know just how the letter reads. Poor papa! he is a slave to stocks and checks, and first and second mortgages, and railway bonds, and such horrors."

Pleasant glanced at Alice, and saw such a mischievous expression on her face that he looked in the other direction as quickly as possible, and began biting his thin lips, and nervously pushing back with one hand the long black hair which fell forward on his shoulders.

Colonel Cliff came down, magnificent in a velvet coat, and was prodigal of compliments to the ladies. A vague sort of envy arose in Pleasant's breast. He looked the Colonel over critically, and resolved to copy from him such points as might seem, on mature reflection, desirable. He felt a trifle humiliated after he had made this resolve, but he set it down to the charge of the Fate which was now pushing him on in so totally unaccountable a manner.

And now Caro ceased playing the "Künstlerleben," and they all went in to breakfast.

Mrs. Merlin stopped pouring the coffee, as she was about to fill Pleasant's cup, and looked at the young man, who sat next to her, with an expression of motherly solicitude.

"Your coat is damp — almost wet, Mr. Merrinott," she said. "You ought to change it. You'll catch cold."

"I have no other with me," he said, frankly; "I didn't expect to remain long on the road — or — or to present myself in company, when I started from Lucerne, and so I left my baggage there. But there is no danger. I have hunted for a whole day with drenched clothes on. I am a savage — as Miss Harrelston thinks we all are in my country — in one respect, at least; I am storm-proof."

Mrs. Harrelston looked at Alice as if she would like to know what her daughter had been saying, but the daughter was busily engaged in conversation with Caro.

"I declare to goodness," said Mrs. Merlin, "I begin to feel as if we had settled down here for ever. But it won't do. Caro an' I must go back to Paris — to our work."

"And I must go to mine," remarked Pleasant, in a low voice. "This delightful — this — our visit here makes me forget what I came to Europe for."

"That's right," said Colonel Cliff, in a burst of friendliness, which he could not explain. "Forget it for a little while. It will do your soul good."

Pleasant winced, and made no answer. But when he was in his room alone once more, after breakfast, he took from his pocket the credentials of his "mission," the paper beginning, "We, the undersigned, residents of the Indian Territory and Citizens of the Cherokee Nation, hereby authorize Pleasant Merrinott, Esq.," and ending with the quaint and nearly illegible signatures of "Cornelius Blackfox, Felix Redbird, Arch Sixkiller, Hurry Walkinstick," etc., and read it carefully through.

"No," he said; "no, I will not forget you — not even for a little while — my poor, abused, threatened countrymen — not for a minute! My duty is first of all to you!"

And for an instant he felt as if he had succeeded in backing his Fate into a corner, and saying courageously to it, "See here! What do you mean by driving me about in this unceremonious fashion!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE GENTLE SAVAGE IS AROUSED.

It rained steadily for three days, and the sweet vale of Meiringen was gloomy and desolate. Pleasant came and went, regardless of the storms; but the ladies complained of headaches, were late to breakfast, excused themselves at dinner, and Caro had a slight attack of fever, which so alarmed her mother that she began to prepare for returning to Paris the moment that the weather would permit.

"If you was to have a fit of sickness here, Caro," she said, "it would worry me into my grave, an' what *would* you do without your mother? I won't stay here a minnit longer 'n I'm obliged to."

Colonel Cliff smoked innumerable cigars, read German novels every morning, and spent his afternoons in seeking opportunities for conversation with Alice. The girl seemed ill at ease, and the Colonel readily saw that she was preoccupied. She chatted merrily with him, but it was evident that she was thinking of something which she could not disclose to him. Whenever Pleasant was in her company, she appeared to take a certain pleasure in making the gentle savage uncomfortable. He had grown more than usually shy since his unexpected burst of confidence on the morning when he related his Grand River

adventure; and he now avoided any allusion to the Indian Territory or to his people when conversing with Alice or the Colonel. Alice was almost terrified one evening at the fierce look which came into his eyes after she had made some mildly satirical remark. She trembled, and reflected that this youth had depths of passion in his soul which it might not be safe to fathom.

Pleasant saw Alice often when she was unaccompanied by any one except her maid, a demure little Alsatian girl, who did not understand a word of English; but he took care not to allude to the adventure in the cañon. It was tacitly understood between them that the subject was tabooed. The mere thought of it sent the hot blood into Alice's cheeks, and in Pleasant's heart it awoke a sweet delirium full of mingled pain and pleasure. Each day he resolved that he would go away; each day his self-appointed mission seemed to call him; and each day, just as he was ready to depart, a word, a look, a gesture from Alice, kept him near her. Even when she stung him with the shafts of her delicate feminine wit, he felt that there was a secret sympathy between them. Caro watched them now and then, while they were gossiping in the parlour where she lay on the sofa wrapped in shawls, and it was not long before she confided to her mother, as an important discovery, the fact that the Indian was desperately in love with Alice.

"Pshaw!" was Mrs. Merlin's response. "The Injun don't know small wood from brush. He don't know his own feelings. He is dazed — kinder mixed up like — because Alice treats him civilly — but that's all!"

"Not at all," said Caro. "It's a case of love at first sight. Why did he come back here to Meiringen? Because he had seen Alice for a moment at Interlaken — had fallen in love with her, and had determined to be near her. A man like that would follow a woman to the

end of the world. And I really believe that Alice finds his company more than agreeable. She'll think she can't get along without it, unless she's care ——"

"There — your face is all flushed again, Caro! You must lay still and not talk. I never see such a disobedient girl as you be. Do you want to *spile* your future? And suppose them two young folks do fall in love with each other, how does that concern us, I should like to know?"

"*Ma!* Surely you wouldn't like to see Miss Harrelston in love with an Indian! Gracious! What an idea!"

"Why not? He's a mighty sight more manly and interestin' than them danglin' Frenchmen that come moonin' around American girls in Paris. And for appearances! Why, he's a regular statue!"

"Yes, a bronze statue," remarked Caro.

"Well, what of his colour? Is that anything against him?"

"Why, mother," concluded Miss Merlin, "you defend Mr. Merrinott as if he were your own brother. I am not finding fault with him; but I think that, if Alice learns to love him, she is providing herself with a nice stock of misery for future use; that's all. He's loyal and frank enough now, but his nature is full of passions which he does not try to control. After all, he's a savage!"

"Caro, you're a goose!" said the mother; "all that you say is perhaps so, but Alice can take care of herself: she's one of the wisest girls I ever see. And that's just what her mother thinks, too."

It was true that Mrs. Harrelston had much confidence in her daughter's wisdom, but that she thought it best usually to supplement it with a certain amount of maternal caution. It had not occurred to the good lady, however, that there was the slightest occasion for warning Alice against any sudden decision in favour of Pleasant Merrinott, for she fancied that the young Cherokee was dis-

tasteful to her daughter. Mrs. Harrelston looked upon Pleasant as a curious type, whom she was not sorry to study for a time, and who had many excellent and praiseworthy traits; but she did not dream that either she or her daughter were likely to give him a passing thought after they left Meiringen. She had listened with an amused yet languid attention to the stories that Colonel Cliff had told her of Pleasant's youthful escapades in the Territory, but they had made no especial impression upon her mind. The Indian would pass on his way, and she would forget him, as she had forgotten dozens of odd and interesting people before.

On the evening of the third day the rain ceased; the mists were swept out of the valley by a strong young wind which came to set the leaves dancing on the trees, the long grasses mysteriously waving and nodding, and the vines on the trellises trembling as if they already dreaded the approach of autumn. The sun peeped out; the guides followed his example; two or three carriage loads of travellers came in from Lucerne; the porches of the inn were encumbered with packages of ulsters, blankets, and shawls, with metal bath-tubs, packed full of the prudent cockney's baggage, with Alpine "stocks," and canes pointed with steel for use in climbing glaciers, and with huge boxes marked "Chicago," "St. Louis," and "St. Paul." Meiringen resumed its wonted aspect, and the landlord of the Reichenbach recovered his temper. In the morning the vale swam in floods of delicious light; a warm breeze had come from Italy, and was visiting every nook and corner; the swollen torrents sang loud pæans of joy.

Alice spent the forenoon on the balcony, trying to read; but on each page of the book, as she endeavoured to fix her thoughts upon it, appeared a picture of a rustic portico, in the mountains, with a young girl seated within it, and a youth kneeling at her feet. Mrs. Merlin came

to gossip with her, but Alice felt an almost irresistible desire to be alone. After luncheon, moved by a sudden impulse, she called her maid, and said—

"Bertine, tell mamma that I am going to walk, and will take you with me; and say that we will be back soon."

The maid presently returned with Mrs. Harrelston's injunction to wear thick shoes, and not to go far, and not to be gone more than an hour, and to take an umbrella, and to come to her as soon as she came in. Alice dressed herself in a gray walking suit, a dainty little hat, which seemed to have hovered down and lighted for a moment only on her beautiful tresses, as a humming-bird touches a flower; and, equipped with stout English walking boots and an alpenstock, she set out merrily for the village of Meiringen, followed by the meek and diminutive maid, who was somewhat encumbered with umbrellas, a cloak, and Alice's camp-stool and sketch-book.

Colonel Cliff, usually so vigilant, did not see them depart; Mrs. Merlin and Caro were taking a nap; and Pleasant had not been seen for hours. Alice rejoiced in her freedom. She walked briskly through the quaint village, where the wooden houses, with their immensely broad sloping roofs, their many windows, and their pious inscriptions, seemed distrustfully to eye the mountain which cast its tremendous shadow upon them, and to be ready to edge as far away from it as they possibly could at a moment's notice. The treacherous hills have often sent down torrents of mud and great masses of stone upon the cottages and the streets; and it is not odd that after a hard rain the villagers and the village itself have an uneasy and apprehensive look.

Miss Harrelston found nothing in the village which she cared to sketch except an old dwarf, who scowled at her so frightfully when she asked him to accord her the honour of a sitting, that she left him, and made her way

toward the Brunig as rapidly as she could. On the mountain road she found the enjoyment which she had coveted. She rambled on so fast that the maid could hardly follow her, and every moss-bed full of gleaming rain-drops, every quivering leaf, every glimpse of the broad expanse of valley below, with its silver rift of river, every green hill-side on which a brown-faced mower was at work mowing where any one but a Swiss would have fallen headlong upon the scythe and cut his own throat, filled her with delight. When she had reached a point where the road, which winds along the flanks of the Brunig, made a sharp turn to the right, leaving on its left a path of pine forest, clothing a pinnacle which stood out above the valley and at a noble height, she stopped, and waited for Bertine to come up.

"We will rest here in the woods, Bertine," she said. "I will make some studies of these tree-trunks, with the effects of light and shade on them and on this mossy bank."

They went into the bit of forest, and after telling Bertine where to place the camp-stool, and to open the sketch-book, Alice strolled forward to the edge of the pinnacle, curious to look out over the vast gulf between the Brunig and the massive line of hills on the other side. There was a hollow in the rock just below where she stood — a hollow upon which the sunlight fell — and she was about to ask the maid to bring the stool and sketch-book there, when she saw something which made her utter a faint cry of surprise and start back hastily, with deep blushes crimsoning her face.

Pleasant Merrinott was seated in the hollow, on a cosy stone, which seemed to have been fashioned expressly for a seat. A bundle of letters and papers lay beside him, and he was intently reading a journal.

"How vexatious!" said Alice to herself. "We are certain to meet even in the most improbable places. Ber-

tine must pack up the things, and we will find another place to sketch."

She had turned to retire when she heard a loud cry, and then a torrent of passionate invective in a language which she did not understand, but which she instantly suspected must be Cherokee. Her first inclination was to laugh at this outburst of savage wrath in an unknown and probably a barbarous tongue, so incongruous with the idyllic beauty of the scene. But then came an impression of fear, for the voice deepened, and she knew that the words which it uttered were full of hatred and menace. The maid came to listen, and looked around timorously.

"Does not Mademoiselle think," she said, in the extremely bad French which she had taken pride in speaking since the war between Germany and France had occurred, and her parents had chosen to remain French citizens — "does not Mademoiselle think that we would be safer in the highway?"

Mademoiselle did not know exactly what she thought, and had she known, she would not have been able to express it, for she stepped back in much confusion as a twig crackled, and Pleasant, his hands filled with letters and papers, and his face clouded with wrath, sprang up out of the hollow, and under a tree directly in front of the girl. For a moment he did not see her, he was so occupied with his own thoughts; but the maid gave a discreet scream, and he looked up.

"You here, Miss Harrelston?" he said. "Oh! I had no idea that any one was near. But I am glad you *are* here. I know that you will sympathize with me; I know you will feel the indignation that I feel."

His lips trembled, his eyes sparkled, and there was such vehemence in his gestures, as he brandished the papers and letters which he had that morning received from

Lucerne, that the maid shrank behind the mistress and pulled at her robe, as if to admonish her to come away at once unless she wished to be killed and eaten. Bertine had learned that Pleasant was an Indian, and therefore considered this fit of rage as preliminary to a scene of carnage. She trembled violently, and wished that she were back in Saverne, even though the Prussians were there.

"Yes," said Alice feebly. "I am here. I came out to sketch. I — we — didn't know that you were here — and — and — the noise frightened us. Was that your voice that we heard a moment ago — all those outcries — you know?"

"Certainly. Outcries, Miss Harrelston? Let me explain ——"

"What language were they in?" She had now recovered her courage, and a faint smile flitted over her face.

"I — I suppose I must have been talking Cherokee," answered Pleasant.

"It's a very — very rough language, isn't it? Well adapted to the expression of anger, I should think."

"No," he answered, sharply. "On the contrary, it is musical — right musical. I am sorry that it frightened you. But listen for a moment, Miss Harrelston. I know that you will sympathize with me. Here is an infamy — well, read for yourself. This is what aroused my anger." He thrust some of the letters and journals into his coat pocket, and strode up to her side with two newspapers open in his hand. "Look! More treachery — more meanness — more vindictive pursuit of the Indian by the white man! Do you wonder that I am angry? Do you wonder that I am in a rage to think that I am more than four thousand miles away! Read!"

There was the ring of command in his last word. Alice took one of the papers and read the paragraph which he had designated. It was a telegraphic despatch from Par-

sons, Kansas, announcing that a second attempt to invade the Indian Territory, as the Black Hills had been invaded, was in progress. Three or four hundred determined white men from Missouri and adjacent States, united with some stout settlers from Iowa, contemplated squatting on the lands in the northern section of the Territory. The Government troops had been ordered to prevent the adventurers from entering, but they probably would find it inconvenient to interfere. It was time that the rich lands of the Territory should be opened to improvement by white men. The action of these "squatters" would doubtless be followed by a general movement for the assimilation of the Indian country to those sections of the United States that bordered upon it. Men and arms could be had to bring the Indians, who were useless dogs in mangers, to reason. And much more of the same sort, related in the elaborately sensational style peculiar to the telegraphic correspondence of newspapers.

"And here is the other! Read the other and later account!" he cried, putting the second paper into her hands. "Sixty of the men have crossed the frontier of the Indian Territory. Two hundred more are expected to follow at once! Read!"

Bertine, observing that her mistress was not tomahawked and thrown over the precipice, plucked up heart, and peered around, over Alice's arm, at the nervous and excited Indian.

"What does it all mean?" said Alice, when she had finished reading. "Of course I partly understand — but — not — you see, I have never been in America, and ——"

"What does it mean?" answered the Indian, taking back the papers and crushing them in his right hand. "Mean? It means that the Government of the United States is a cowardly and lying Government, incompetent and unwilling to keep its promises; ready to see its most

sacred treaties trodden under foot at a moment's notice! It means that after having driven our people from their homes in the South, where they were happy and prosperous, that accursed Government now proposes to drive us from the lands which were deeded to us, by solemn treaty, as a refuge — as our own for ever and for ever — given to us as some slight compensation for all that had been taken from us! Mean? It means that the white man will not be satisfied until he has driven us into the Pacific Ocean, and that the time has come to make a stand against him, even if we have to renew those wars in which — history will tell you — we have not always come off second best!"

"But I never heard of all this," stammered Alice. "Is it possible that such an injustice can have been committed, and no outcry made about it?"

Pleasant smiled as Alice looked up at him with real perplexity on her face.

"No," he said, more gently than she would have thought possible after his indignation. "No, you never heard of it; or if you have now and then heard it mentioned, it has not been considered of sufficient importance by those who spoke of it to command their attention or yours for more than a moment. There are plenty of people in the United States who have never given any thought to this injustice. But they have worried their brains a great deal over Poland and Ireland, and the Servians and the Bulgarians." A moment later he added, "Perhaps the Indians have been overlooked because they have never had any really great advocate of their own race to urge their claims and to expose their wrongs. But now it is too late to reason. Unless they make a bold stand they will be crushed; they will be whirled away as these sprays of pine here at our feet will be scattered before the autumn wind."

"And what do you mean to do, Mr. Merrinott?"

"I am going home — home at once. My duty lies on the other side of the Atlantic now, and I must get there as soon as I can."

"Home at once, Mr. Merrinott? I thought papa — or was it Colonel Cliff — said that you had but just arrived in Europe."

"That is true. But I must go — to-morrow."

"Must you?"

The young Indian looked at Alice in surprise. There was a tone in her voice which he had never noticed before. It was full of regret — of longing. Alice was gazing intently at a mossy stone at her feet.

"Now," thought Pleasant, "is the time to tell her that I love her — loved her the first time that I saw her, and shall love her for ever. But I dare not."

"I see that you are an enthusiast, Mr. Merrinott," Alice said after a long silence.

"I reckon I am," responded the Indian. "I am terribly in earnest about this question of territory. But I am sorry to have troubled you with it. I know that at times my earnestness makes me ridiculous." He was quite sincere in saying this, for he was morbidly self-conscious. "Let us forget it for the present," he said. "Ah, you were going to make some sketches, and I am keeping you from much pleasanter occupation than a discussion on frontier politics."

"No. The sketching is of no consequence. But I should like to understand this whole question — this injustice to the Indians — a great deal better."

"Then it really interests you?" said Pleasant. And his face was quite radiant.

CHAPTER X.

A PROMISE.

THERE is nothing so inspiring as genuine sympathy, and Pleasant found this eminently true in his case. He began to talk to Alice on his favourite subject with diffidence and with awkwardness; but presently he saw that she was deeply interested, and then he grew eloquent. Alice sat down on the camp-stool, opened her book, and pretended to be engaged in the reproduction of a tuft of moss not far away; but in reality she could not sketch. The young Indian's voice, his large, quick, and energetic gestures, and his tremendous sincerity exercised a strange charm over her. Once or twice she blushed as she observed that Bertine's eyes were fixed on her with grave and almost reproachful surprise; for she knew that the maid considered it highly improper for Miss Harrelston to engage in this woodland *tête-a-tête* with a young man whom she had known but a few days. But the narrative into which Pleasant had plunged was so logical and clear, so filled with dramatic incidents, that Alice could not have moved from the spot had she wished to do so. She glanced up at the young man occasionally, and the manly figure standing erect before her, the dark glowing face, and the flashing eyes, pleased her. She did not attempt to deny this to herself; still, she felt it her duty once or

twice to utter a sarcastic comment, which made Pleasant bite his lips, and restrain his enthusiasm for a minute or two.

An hour had passed unperceived when he finished his recital with a graphic description of the injustice which had culminated in the removal of the remnants of the Creek, Cherokee, Chickasaw, and other tribes of Indians from their Southern homes to the great territory which they now occupy west of the Mississippi. He drew a long breath, stepped back a few paces, and glanced rather timidly at Alice, as if fearful that she might have been laughing at him. Then he said —

"That's all, Miss Harrelston. You asked me to tell you, or I should not have thought of taking your attention from your sketching for such a time. But it's a right long story."

"And a very sad one," said Alice. "Are you certain that you do not exaggerate some of the details, Mr. Merrinott? It seems to me that you have made the white man appear like a rogue."

"When I was at college," remarked the Indian, "I read Chateaubriand's 'Journey in America.' Chateaubriand says that he met an old Iroquois chief, who told him that the white men would never be satisfied until they had possession of all the land, and that they would not leave the last of the Indians enough earth to cover their bones. That was in 1791. The Iroquois's prophecy bids fair to be fulfilled."

"Let us hope not. Surely some way out of the difficulty can be found. You must not give way to despair."

"Ah! the saddest feature of our decay is that we are somewhat divided against ourselves. That's the reason that a man of action is needed in the Nation now." His eyes sparkled, and he stretched out his right arm as if he held a weapon, and were about to lead an attack. "At

the beginning of this century, Miss Harrelston, when our tribes lived in the beautiful lands in Georgia and Alabama and Tennessee, the Creeks condemned to death and executed one of their chiefs who had dared to sell land to the white men without having received permission from the Council of the Nation. But the old spirit is gone now, and I suppose I must confess that traitors are not only allowed to live in our midst, but to speak their minds boldly."

"You are thinking of the Bluelots now," said Alice, with a gentle accent of reproach in her voice. "Of those dreadful people — you remember — one of whom threw you into the Grand River."

"If our people were the men that their fathers were, the Bluelots would give us no more trouble. The traitors would be hanged to the first convenient trees, I reckon. They deserve death for being willing to give up our lands, or to admit white people to settle upon them; for land is power everywhere, at all times. Give up the land, and he who takes it becomes your master. We hold our lands in common as a safeguard; for we know that the moment they can be divided, and bought and sold by white men, the acres will slip from under the feet of the Indian, and we shall be homeless on the face of the earth. Bah! when I think that such injustices can be consummated — it makes me feel that the world is all wrong, and that the whole order of society ought to be destroyed, so that men can begin over again, and build better the second time!"

Alice smiled, for she remembered the account which her father had given of Pleasant's ill-humour with the world, as manifested in the garden of the Kursaal at Interlaken the first time that he had seen him. She closed her sketch-book, folded her hands in her lap, and looked up at the Indian.

"Don't you think that you are in danger of doing the world injustice?" she said. "Because you are suffering from a sense of wrong is it right to accuse the universe in that grand general fashion?"

"I don't know what it all means," he said faintly, as if the problem lay heavily upon him and crushed his strength out. "I cannot see why one race should slowly exterminate another: why a civilization that is barbarous enough — Heaven knows — should be allowed to dictate terms to people whom it chooses to consider barbarians, and why plighted faith should not be kept when pledged to a red man by a white man. It appears to me that the tendency of what people are pleased to term modern civilization is to assume that white human beings are ordained by fate to be the eaters, and that the black and yellow and red races are to be the eaten."

Miss Harrelston did not feel prepared to follow Pleasant into the intricate mazes of an ethnological argument. She was thinking of the Bluelots, and of the savage feud between Bluelots and Merrinotts. A little picture of a young man lying dead with a pistol wound in his side — his long black hair streaming over the flower-besprinkled sward of a prairie — and his enemies striding quietly and sternly away from the scene of their crime, flitted before her eyes.

"You are divided against yourselves, as you say, Mr. Merrinott. How can that be remedied, except by discussion, and by persuasion? Surely that is better than fighting. Oh! I am afraid that you are going home to renew the feud of which you have told us so much!"

Pleasant looked down at the mosses and the pine sprays. Alice had divined his secret thought. He longed to be at home that he might checkmate the Bluelots — exterminate them — if necessary.

"You know my sentiments about those people, Miss

Harrelston," he said, doggedly. "It's no use repeating them to you, for I reckon that you do not approve of them."

Alice was silent. She had determined to exact a promise from Pleasant Merrinott before he left her that afternoon, but she was sorely perplexed as to the manner of approaching the subject.

The sunlight poured in through a cleft in the pines, and Alice's fair young head was transfigured by the radiance. Pleasant looked so earnestly at her that she felt uneasy, and arose. Bertine started forward to shut up the camp-stool and take the sketch-book; and now that Miss Harrelston prepared to depart, Pleasant suddenly remembered that this was the last day that he should see her, and that he had decided to tell her of his love. But while the very words of confession were at his lips, he was rendered speechless by the doubt which arose — gigantic, shadowy — in his mind, as to his right to speak of his affection. The news which he had received from the Territory had revived all his passion for his race, his prejudices, his Indian pride. He was called anew to enter upon the active duties of his mission. Was this the moment in which to tell a woman of the white race that he loved her deeply, irrevocably, passionately; that in the few days since he had first seen her, she had usurped complete control over his being; that her image was before him day and night; and that, in short, she epitomized the universe for him? Was it not rather his duty to tear his love for her out of his heart; to fly from the enchantment to which he had been subjected from the first moment of his meeting with Alice? He was amazed at his sudden change of front. He suddenly became as resolved not to tell her of his love as he had been, twenty-four hours before, that she should know it. She noticed the change in his face, and fancied that she had offended him.

…will not mind my …y comments on your …ter and … — I presume I say just what I should … and had better opportunities for studying the … people."

… not done something wrong. Miss Harrelston," … — "Your little servant is looking at me with … eyes. Have I been improper in any way? … remember that I am a savage."

… probably remembers mamma's command to … an hour. I have been much interested in … have said, and much saddened by some of it. … down the hill."

… up at him with a smile which made his … For the moment he cursed his mission, … falling on his knees at her side and crying, … love you!" But Alice continued in a low …

…Merrinott, you have told us — told me, especially …ch about your wild life, and the dangers that are … you cannot blame me for taking an interest in it. … ask you — and I hope you will not be offended …nise me before you return to your home ——"

…lushed, and was more confused than she had …o be, because the gentle savage stopped short, …her earnestly with his great coal-black eyes,

… Miss Harrelston: I will promise you anything; …re you nothing."

…re you return to your home, that whatever …matter how strange or disagreeable the cir- … may be, you will absolutely withdraw from …th the —— the Bluelots ——"

…arrelston!"

… was loud and angry. Alice trembled a little,

…ton-

"But you gave me your promise, Mr. Merrinott. Will you not keep it? That whatever may happen, you will withdraw from the feud with the Bluelots, and that you will never take a deadly weapon in your hands——"

"Stop, Miss Harrelston, please," he said, hoarsely; "I couldn't promise you that. I didn't dream that you intended—it would be impossible! Why, the Bluelots killed my brother! The Bluelots would sell their country for a handful of money! The Bluelots would call me a coward, and kill me like a dog, and be glad to have me out of the way, if they knew that I went about the Nation unarmed! No, no, Miss Harrelston, don't ask me that! There's nothing else that I will not do for you—for *you*, but don't ask me to promise that!"

Alice was grieved, and Pleasant read her grief in her face!

"You don't know what one of those long feuds is," he said. "It was wicked even to let you know that such things exist. I have given you pain, and I am right sorry."

"But, Mr. Merrinott, you have no privilege to take vengeance into your own hands. You can use legal means to punish the Bluelots; but you ought not to fight with them; it is degrading. You are right to drive out the invaders of your land if you can; but to perpetuate a personal, a family feud, seems to me——"

"Contemptible! Perhaps you might have used a harsher word, Miss Harrelston. But remember that this feud is not of my creating. It is a legacy, as I said the other day."

"Then promise me this, Mr. Merrinott," said the girl, impetuously. "You are going back across the ocean to do a grand and noble thing—to do all that you can for the protection of your race, and that is honourable and inspiring. But don't sully it with murder—don't condescend to

personal vengeance. When I think that you might become a—a murderer, it fills me with horror! Promise me that, whatever happens, you will do nothing to prolong the feud with the Bluelots, and that if you are brought into contact with them you will—will never use a weapon, unless it is entirely in self-defence. Can—you—promise?"

Pleasant's pride was touched, although he admired and loved the girl more and more at each moment. His black look returned.

"Murder is a hard word," he said. "I don't think you would have any right to call me a murderer if I shot every Bluelot that is left in the world. Each of the scoundrels has forfeited his life. Still, I reckon I will make the promise like you worded it the last time. Yes, I reckon you may count on me for that. I'm right sorry I couldn't promise you the balance of what you asked. I did not believe until you spoke that there was anything in the world that I would not do for you. Why, Miss Harrelston—you don't know how much——"

The girl had paused in her walk, but now she moved on again, and so fast that Pleasant, in his hurry to keep up, forgot exactly what he was going to say. He noticed that his heart beat so loudly that he could hear it, and fancied that she must be amused at his agitation. They left the little patch of forest, and came into the road, Bertine flitting on ahead, with her arms full and groaning under her burden, but looking back distrustfully at the earnest pair from time to time. Bertine was thoroughly perplexed. The Indian startled and annoyed her. She was jealous of the impression which he appeared to have produced upon her mistress, and had she been able to speak English, would, perhaps, have found means to tell him so.

By-and-by they came to a turn in the road where they could look down into the vale of Meiringen. Pleasant stopped resolutely, and said—

"Good-bye, Miss Harrelston. I am going away to-night; but before I go I want to get into the mountains alone and think over what I ought to do. You — you have given me a right smart deal to think about. You revolutionize me. I — I believe I shall be a better man for having met you. You are the first person who ever really sympathized with me." He stopped, confused at his own frankness; but, recovering himself, he added, "After all, I cannot see why you should be so anxious to save my life. It isn't worth saving."

O indiscreet Indian! Had Alice Harrelston been more worldly-minded, how would she have made you suffer for that awkward remark! But Alice said, softly —

"Did you not save my life — the other day? You would not like to think that I am ungrateful — would you?"

"Angel!" thought Pleasant: "how quickly, if I dared, would I go down on my knees before you and confess all! But I dare not."

"Ungrateful?" he stammered. "I — I did nothing. You — had fainted — and — I hope you will forgive me; but I could not leave you there, and so I took you up and brought you out into the daylight."

How lovely was the faint flush upon the girl's cheeks! It reminded him of the exquisite roseate glow which he had noted on the snowy brow of the Jungfrau. Oh! if he might speak! But his mission! his duty! his race! his country! No! he would not speak — he would not see her again!

"Good-bye."

He held out his hand. She gave him hers frankly and cordially.

"I am sure we shall hear good news of you some day, Mr. Merrinott. Perhaps you will lead your people — help them — save them — who knows? You will not leave

Meiringen without saying a word of parting to mamma and the other friends at the hotel?"

"Certainly not. How stupid I am! Then I shall see you there again before I go."

"Perhaps. But if not, remember your promise. And —good-bye for the——"

"Present," she intended to say, but Pleasant had vanished from her side, and Bertine was gazing in round-eyed amazement at the steep pathway up which he had sprung with the ease and agility of a deer.

"You must not mention this to mamma, Bertine," said Alice, as they hastened homeward. "That young man is very strange. He is an Indian who has some vexatious business with papa, and he has insisted on telling me all about it. Perhaps he thinks I can persuade papa to help him."

"Very well, miss, I understand, perfectly," said Bertine; and she *did* at last understand, much better than either Alice or Pleasant understood themselves.

Alice did not come down to dinner that evening. She had a headache, and stayed in her room, retiring to rest very early. At nine o'clock her mother came into her room, and surprised her daughter with her beautiful head buried in the pillows, and sobbing as if her heart would break.

"Why, little Alice," she said, "what does this mean? Are you very ill?"

"It's only my head. You know, *petite maman*, I must have my cry out when my head aches. I shall be well to-morrow. Don't worry. And please don't light the lamps."

Mrs. Harrelston had come to tell her daughter that "that eccentric Mr. Merrinott had suddenly decided to go away, and had just ordered a carriage." But she reflected for a minute, and concluded to say nothing about it. She

knew that there was no remedy for Alice's headaches, so she sat down by the bedside to watch with the girl until she had sobbed herself to sleep.

Pleasant drove all the way to Interlaken that night, and displayed so much bad temper on the way that the mild-mannered coachman almost carried him over a bluff in the heat of his unwonted efforts to comply with the youth's exacting demands for speed. A full-blooded Indian would have been more calm, but Pleasant, as he daily remembered with bitterness, was not a "full-blood."

CHAPTER XI.

A MYSTERIOUS INSTRUMENT.

THE young Indian did not stay long in Interlaken. He looked once only at the Jungfrau, but his brief glance at the majestic mountain brought with it a memory of Alice, which he tried in vain to put away. This memory went with him, awakening in his heart a strange mixture of pleasure and pain, as he crossed the Lake of Thun, and hastened on to the pleasant town of Berne. He had telegraphed to Lucerne for any letters which might be awaiting him there, and was pleased to receive one or two fat envelopes, addressed, in a very scraggy hand-writing, to "Mr. Pleasant Merrinott of the Cherokee Nation," when he gave his name at the Hotel Bellevue. A solemn waiter in black ushered him into a little room overlooking a garden perched on a high terrace, and left him alone. Pleasant broke open the largest of the letters with feverish haste, and when he had read it dropped the paper upon the floor, and sat looking into space for some minutes without moving a muscle. If he had had the strength to speak he would have said that his Fate had once more taken charge of him, and was pushing him onward in most imperious fashion.

The letter which Pleasant had read was from one of the Indians who resided in Washington as the delegate of those Cherokees who were determined that the Indian

Territory should not be opened to white settlers. It contained a circumstantial account of the "invasion," the account of which had so aroused Pleasant's anger on the day when he met Alice near Meiringen. But there was a grain of comfort in the statement that the invaders were few in number, and would soon be compelled to retreat. The paragraph which most surprised the young Indian, however, was the following: —

"All things considered, we reckon that the best course for you to pursue is to remain in Europe — say a month or two longer — and, in case you do not hear to the contrary from us, perhaps a year or two. We believe that you can serve our cause better than any one else whom we can find. You are educated; you have some money; and you believe in yourself and in us. Keep up your protest, and make opinion in our favour among the investors and bankers in general. There is a right smart to do for us in Europe, and you can do it. We felt that possibly you would be inclined to come home at once when you heard the news; but be cool, and never mind these little incidents over here. You are our delegate beyond the big Pond, and the people in the Nation believe that you are saving the situation.

"The Bluelots are powerful curious to know what you are up to, and one of them said, the other day, at Vinita, that if you came home he would find out what you had been doing, and if it wasn't all straight, he would — well — he said he'd blow your head off. We know that you would give a good account of yourself if you were in the Territory, but we feel as if we needed you over where you are. I enclose you a lot of fresh data on the railroad matter. Now, Pleasant, keep the ball a-rolling, and let us know how you get along. You can draw on the fund when you get tired of spending your own money. Don't disappoint us; and so no more at present from yours sincerely."

The writer, who was, like Pleasant, a half-breed Cherokee, had signed his quaint name with a flourish, and added in a postscript written across the body of the epistle, "We are waiting anxiously for the result of your interview with the banker. We know that you will not weaken."

Pleasant remained absorbed in thought for more than half an hour. Then he arose with unclouded brow, and began unpacking his slender baggage.

"What a fool I was not to remain in Meiringen!" he said. "Let me see. The train for Paris leaves late in the afternoon. Shall I go to Paris and continue my campaign at once, or — shall I remain here for a time? I really — don't — know."

He ordered lunch in the garden, and while waiting for it he loitered on the terrace. In the distance he saw the noble white line of the Bernese Alps, and for an instant he felt tempted to go back to them — to return to Alice. Alice! Why should he think of her? Why was the air filled with faces like hers? Why did the very thought of her name cause his heart to beat violently? He must forget her, and attend to his work.

After lunch he wandered through the streets of the ancient town, and found relief from his perplexity in gazing at the curious costumes of the peasants, the long arcades, beneath which hundreds of tiny shops were ranged, and the innumerous stone fountains into which cool water ran and plashed musically. It seemed to him that he had been mysteriously conveyed backward hundreds of years into the past, and that he was a knight, with jingling spur and with sword buckled at side, who had come riding in from his fortified castle in the neighbourhood to idle away a few pleasant hours in Berne. He went down the sunny side and up the shady side of street after street; peeped into dark and rather ill-smelling beer

houses, where solemn peasants sat with enormous glasses of beer and crusts of black bread before them; watched the ugly old women seated on wooden benches in the shadows of stone pillars, knitting as if their very lives depended upon every stitch; and went down huge stairways and up long passages and over small bridges unweariedly.

It was a market day, and in the middle of each principal street there was a throng of broad-hatted women and girls, some squatted upon the cobble stones, others leaning on benches, and all with heaps of vegetables, fruits, or home-made articles of clothing before them. Cattle were tied to posts, and protested with loud bellowings against their comfortless sojourn in the sun; goats, on sale, perpetually climbed over imaginary hills and butted at invisible enemies; sheep patiently awaited their new purchasers; fowls gabbled, cocks crew, horses neighed, and waggoners jested in loud, coarse voices. Bottles of white wine were brought out to the thirsty peasantry, and smoke from immense porcelain pipes arose on the air.

When Pleasant was tired of the market and of the importunities of the small shopkeepers, who were anxious that he should buy wooden bears carrying umbrellas, wooden bears wearing spectacles, wooden bears fighting duels, and wooden bears proudly upholding the blazon of the old city of Berne, — he took refuge on the bank of the River Aar, at a point where the burghers long ago built a pretty square, and planted it with trees, and set in its midst a fountain, surmounted by a terrible image of the Child Eater, destined to terrify wilful children.

A group of white-haired girls and boys was gravely contemplating this mediæval representation of the "old man" concerning whom every one has heard so much in childhood days. The ogre is depicted in the act of crunching, with diabolical satisfaction, the head of the innocent

babe, while a plentiful supply of the same delicate creatures hangs at his back. The mites are expecting to be devoured, and their frantic gestures and woe-begone faces are enough to strike terror into the heart of the most refractory child.

Pleasant turned with a smile from this fabulous monster, and presently went down into the deep, dark cellar under the Corn Market, and in the gloom saw long rows of gigantic casks, every one of which was a worthy rival of the mammoth tuns of Heidelberg. Here a deep-voiced maiden came to take his order, and he abstractedly drank the red wine which she set before him. When his eyes were accustomed to the dimness, he saw that he was surrounded by a goodly company. Grave-looking men weighted with years, men with gray beards, but faces of fiery red, men who were doubtless the magistrates, the counsellors, and the thinkers of Berne, sat quaffing frequent cups with evident gusto. The prosaic garb of the nineteenth century seemed to suit them poorly. Pleasant fancied that they would appear to better advantage in doublets and hose, in mantles and caps, in blue and scarlet and green.

From the wine-cellar he went to the great plateau on which the cathedral stands, and there in the comfortable shade he sat down upon a bench. This walk among the odd sights of Berne had refreshed his mind; he forgot for a few minutes the perplexities of his mission, and gave himself up to the dreamy intoxication which the traveller from new countries, where Nature is still supreme, feels in old lands, where Art has entered every corner and set its foot upon each threshold.

Below the great stone platform, high on the bluff, were banks rich with grasses, flowers, and ferns almost as brilliant as those of Western America. Pretty villas occupied the highest range of hills, sloping downward from

the pinnacle; more modest dwellings filled up the second terrace; and near the river was a mass of dark, ancient houses, huddling together as if imploring the protection of the cathedral. These abodes of the populace were grimy with the accumulated dust of centuries; they were filled with labyrinthine passages, mysterious flights of steps, ridiculous little balconies, which looked out upon nothing at all — backyards which seemed to have been constructed expressly to cheat the sun — and claustral chambers, with iron-barred windows, through which babies innumerable were continually thrusting their adventurous heads.

One house in particular, which Pleasant could see from the place where he sat, was impressively full of the mystery of age. It was a gloomy structure of many storeys, standing in the midst of, yet somewhat isolated from, a few smaller ones. Narrow footways between these diminutive houses led up to the large one. Pleasant wondered if life in such a venerable pile could be agreeable — if within he should find the babble of women's voices, the laughter of children, the noise of a loom, or the purr of a cat. Was civilization a triumph, when it built such grim and unwholesome structures for human life to dwell in? He did not reflect that the house dated from a time when perpetual petty warfare compelled artisan and prince alike to crowd together within the narrow bounds of high and strong fortifications. The old building annoyed him; he would have liked to tear it down, and have it replaced by a more cheerful residence. The more he gazed at it, the stronger grew his curiosity to know something about its inmates. "Why should I not go there?" he thought. "I have nothing else to do for the moment."

After he had looked out upon the river, which ran foaming and dancing with hilarious swiftness around a little island, and then impetuously past the tall houses, and then under a high bridge, and so on through another

and more aristocratic quarter of the town, he left the platform and the cathedral, and, with some difficulty, found his way, by a long staircase, to the valley and the neighbourhood of the mysterious house.

Good wives, engaged in the peaceful pursuit of washing the garments of strangers visiting the hotels, and good men sawing and splitting firewood, aided, in many cases, by their stout daughters, stared at Pleasant's long hair, and glanced at each other suspiciously as he penetrated alley after alley in this domain of the poor. Diminutive maidens tugging babies in their arms, and feeding them with vast slices of bread, fled distrustfully into corners at his approach. Queer dogs barked at him, parrots sarcastically addressed him in corrupt German, and cats leaped precipitately out of his path. An old crone, who looked as aged as the Alps, and who, like them, had snowy white upon her brows, was sitting on a low door-step near the entrance to a narrow street leading to the house which Pleasant especially desired to see. As he passed she muttered something of which he understood not a word, but which seemed to him more like a malediction than an entreaty or a blessing.

"Now, here," thought Pleasant, "is the place of all places in the world to hide. In that small chamber, opening into that infinitesimal balcony, a man might stay for years, unknown, undiscovered, and certainly no one would think of searching for him there." The fancy, though trivial, pleased him, and he continued to indulge it as he neared the dingy walls of the house which had fascinated him.

A black and frowning archway gave entrance to a passage which ran through the structure from side to side, and was crossed at right angles by another exactly similar one. As Pleasant entered, a cold breeze, charged with the acrid humours which had gathered upon the stones, and

with the odours from the tenements on either side, smote his senses unpleasantly. He turned as if to retire, but after a moment's reflection he went in. No one challenged his right to enter. There were few signs of life in the dark dens in which the poor of Berne hid their misery. At the angle of the passages he turned, and was walking slowly forward in a gloom which increased with each step, when a door, at a point where he had not suspected that there was an aperture, was thrown open; he heard the sound of voices, and standing against the wall in the thickest of the shadow, he was the involuntary witness of a singular scene.

Through the open doorway Pleasant looked in upon a small, meanly-furnished room, filled with brass and iron and copper instruments hanging on the whitewashed stone walls, or arranged upon blackened counters, or lying in confusion on the floor. In one corner stood a work-bench fitted with vises, hammers, pincers, and a host of tools both delicate and strong. Opposite the door was a recess, into which a clear light came from a shaft worked in the wall, probably fitted with a large window above; and standing where the light fell most fully was an old man, upholding in his two withered hands a small machine, beautifully finished, and glittering. This machine was not much larger than the works of a small clock, and Pleasant's first thought was that he had stumbled upon the den of a maker of some of the ingenious timepieces for which Switzerland is famous.

The old man was clad in a long greasy great-coat, the edges of which had at some remote period probably been lined with strips of fur, now fallen to the estate of rows of mangy hide; and his whole personal appearance indicated extreme poverty. His features, which were seamed with wrinkles and scars, were of a pronounced Hebraic type, and in front of each of his venerable ears a waving gray

curl hung down. His face would have been sinister and repulsive, had it not been at that moment lighted up with a strange smile of triumph which made it almost heroic. As the sordid old man held the brass mechanism to the light, and gazed fondly on it, it was easy to see that he was contemplating a marvel which he had himself constructed, and that his professional pride was thoroughly aroused.

He spoke rapidly in a low voice, and in a language entirely unfamiliar to Pleasant — as if he were addressing a vigorous apostrophe to some unseen person. As he was in the midst of a veritable rhapsody there was the rustle of a dress, and a woman stepped forward hastily, and eagerly stretched out one hand as if she, also, were desirous of caressing the cunning toy of which its maker seemed so proud. The old man cast a disturbed glance at the open door, as if he feared observation; then he slowly lowered the brass mechanism, and placed it in the lady's hands. Just then a third figure, that of a young and handsome man, came into the light, and bent its face gravely above the machine. Pleasant stared, started, and knocked one foot loudly against a projecting stone.

He had recognized the musician Stanislas.

His first impulse was to step forward into the little room and salute this new acquaintance, whom he had found again in such an out-of-the-way corner. But a second look at the group convinced him that he must do nothing of the kind. At the sound which he had made by his unwitting stumble the old man's face grew livid, and his whole frame was tremulous with abject fear. He seized the machine, unceremoniously snatching it from the lady's hands, and thrust it beneath the folds of his coat, crossing his lean arms over it, as if he were prepared to defend it to the uttermost. The lady looked up in surprise, and Pleasant saw that she was young, and, although not

beautiful, possessed an attractive, magnetic face. As for Stanislas, he gazed at the old man coldly for a moment or two, then addressed him a remark which seemed intended to quiet his fears; but as Stanislas spoke in the same language which the venerable trembler had employed, Pleasant was no wiser. Presently the old man pointed in the direction of the door, and grew more frantic with terror than before. The woman herself was visibly moved, and gazed so intently at the black mass of shadow in which Pleasant was standing that he felt extremely uncomfortable, and determined to steal away the moment it was possible. He hoped that they would close the door, thus allowing him to depart unobserved.

Who was this aged artisan, hidden in this obscure cellar in the slums of Berne, and why should Stanislas visit him? And who was the lady? Who could she be but the Vera of the letter which Pleasant had found on the stairs of the inn at Meiringen? And why had Stanislas said that he was going to London, when in reality he had come to Berne to meet a *Vera?* And what was the mechanism which they were examining? "Perhaps," thought Pleasant, "Stanislas is perfecting some musical invention, which he desires to keep a profound secret for the present, and has employed this old man to work out the principle. Yet no; that cannot be — for the instrument-maker would show no such fear about the discovery of a matter like that. What can it be?"

The lady spoke to Stanislas, and before Pleasant could move away, the musician stepped quickly into the passage, shading his eyes with his hand. Pleasant saw that retreat would be useless, and came forward. The musician looked sharply at him, as if he did not at first recognize him. But finally a smile lighted up his face; he took Pleasant's proffered hand, and said, in English —

"Mr. Merrinott! How in the name — of — the mar-

vellous did you find your way here? It — must — have been — I suppose — by accident?"

There was an accent of suspicion which Pleasant did not like in this last sentence.

"Evidently by accident," he answered, a trifle coldly. "I could hardly have expected to find you here — for you told me you were going to London."

Stanislas coughed. "True — true — at Meiringen I did tell you so. What a singular meeting. Come in, and tell us how you happened to find your way to this den of science. "Come in."

Without giving Pleasant time to voice the many excuses and objections which were rising to his lips, he drew him, still holding his hand, into the room, and closed the door behind him. The young Cherokee stood, a little confused, in the presence of the lady, whose face was white, but whose demeanour was calm.

"Fear nothing, Vera, for the excellent reason that there is nothing to fear," said Stanislas to the young woman. He spoke in Polish, the language in which the old man had also spoken. "This is the Indian, the American, of whom I have spoken to you. He is an enthusiast, a malcontent; he is safe. Do you hear me? I say that he is safe. Can you not reassure that grimy idiot yonder?" He pointed with a contemptuous smile to the instrument-maker, who appeared more frightened than ever, and who still kept his arms folded tightly over his breast.

The lady looked very carefully and intently at Pleasant's face. He felt that he had never been so scrutinized before. Then she held out her hand to him.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DISCIPLES OF BAKOUNIN.

"ALLOW me to apologize for my intrusion," said Pleasant to the lady. "I really think that it would be well for me to go away at once. Monsieur Stanislas will assure you that my presence here is entirely accidental." He spoke in English, rather hesitatingly, and glanced at Stanislas as he concluded his remarks. A faint smile, which had a certain cynicism in it, and which did not please the young Indian, flitted over the musician's face.

"Sister Vera, speak for yourself," said Stanislas. "Your judgment is rarely at fault. Shall the gentleman retire or remain? We might almost — fancy — that Fate — has sent him here."

Pleasant was surprised to hear the lady respond in English, and in a deep, musical voice, "Brother Stanislas, after what you have told me of this gentleman I think we are justified in asking him to remain. Do you know, Monsieur," she continued, looking Pleasant in the face and smiling, "that you have given us a fright? I confess that my limbs tremble a little even now. Stanislas, will you give me a chair? Ah! I forgot that there is none in this dreadful den. That stool will do. Is it clean? Thanks." She seated herself; pushed back, with a pretty movement of her thin, white hands, her simple hat from her broad brow, and seemed inclined for conversation.

Pleasant was puzzled. For an instant he felt an inclination to turn and escape from the place. He grew dizzy in the close atmosphere, laden with the odours of hot metals and acids. He was half persuaded that he had fallen asleep, and that these figures around him were visions. Who and what were these people? The lady was young; her features were thin and delicate, her lips firm, her eyes blue and clear. Her wavy chestnut hair had been cut short, and was parted at one side and combed carelessly back. Her dress was plain and in excellent taste. The only defect in her face was a masculine sternness, which seemed born of a great purpose. This was a woman who had a mission.

Stanislas stepped forward and touched Pleasant's arm lightly. "Mr. Merrinott," he said, "you seem surprised. A few words will explain everything. We all speak English here — and" — here he glanced suspiciously around — "perhaps it will be wise to say all that we have to say in that language, for every wall has ears that gape to hear *us* when *we* speak."

"Every wall has eyes, too," said the old man, interrupting Stanislas. "Ears and eyes. See! we open the door for one little minute, because the lady is ready to faint in the bad air — and there are eyes and ears in the darkness outside." He pointed at Pleasant. "It is terrible. We are safe nowhere — unless — unless — we make sure."

Pleasant looked sternly at the old man, whose last words had sounded like a menace, and he was startled to see a threatening expression in the unsteady eyes.

"Ah! my lad," said the aged instrument-maker, "you are surprised to hear me speak in English, are you not? Why, I have spoken it for four-and-twenty years! Aha! I learned it before you were born. Why, child, I lived in London forty years! Forty years — not a day less. You

see that I was not born yesterday. Oh! you may speak your English here. But let me tell you something for your instruction. You came here by accident. Good. You are a friend of Stanislas. Good. You are a stranger from beyond the sea. Good. But remember that what you have seen here — that all you hear in this room, must be kept as secret as the grave. For, though walls have ears to hear us — we can make our way through all walls — and we have long arms to strike. And when one is not as secret as the grave about us, we send him to the grave with his secret. Ah!"

The man shrank back into his corner, for Pleasant had raised his right hand impatiently. "Do you threaten me?" he said. "Look at me! I am an Indian. Do you think I am afraid of threats? What do you mean?"

Stanislas was at the old man's side in an instant, and caught him roughly by the shoulder and shook him. "Are you losing your senses?" he said. "Have you not heard me tell Vera that this gentleman is safe? Must you presume to threaten him?"

"He is warned," said the instrument-maker, sullenly. "Tell him what you please, now."

"He is safe, I tell you," continued Stanislas. "He will not betray us, because, like each of us, he is a victim of the injustice of society and government. The first time that I ever saw him I marked him for one of us."

"Explain, if you please," said Pleasant, in amazement. "Who and what are you?"

"Sister Vera will tell you that," said the musician; "she has a wonderful talent for lucid explanation!" Again his smile impressed the young Indian disagreeably.

"I am sure I do not understand you," stammered Pleasant. "I am not anxious to know your secrets; I did not ask you to show me this room. I have no desire

— and certainly have no interest — to betray any confidence that you bestow on me; but why ——"

"Do you remember saying to me at Meiringen, while we were peacefully smoking our cigars in the garden of the inn, that the world is all wrong; that the whole system of society ought to be destroyed, so that men may begin over again and build better a second time?"

"Well, yes; I reckon I have said that right often, and especially within the last few days, when I have been thinking of the wrongs which my race has suffered."

"That remark," said Stanislas, "convinced me that you were one of us."

Pleasant was about to answer, but the lady spoke. "In America," she said, "you theorize when you are discontented; but you do nothing else. In Europe we act. Society has been tried on its merits, found wanting, and condemned. It must be destroyed."

"You are conspirators!" cried the young Indian.

"Not at all," answered the lady, coldly. "We are executioners."

"That is it," said Stanislas, with his mocking smile. "We are weary of the established order of things, and we propose to upset it. Are you greatly shocked, and do you think we are horrible monsters?" He drew a package of cigarettes from his pocket, offered it to Pleasant, who declined, and to the lady, who took one, and finally to the old man, who took three, and quietly stowed them away in a pocket of his greasy coat, still clinging with one hand to the machine, which he kept hidden in his bosom.

"I will not light it just now," said the lady, as Stanislas offered her a match. "Yes — in America you are satisfied to theorize. You put your social question aside, and say that it can wait. But we meet ours face to face. We grapple with it."

The young Cherokee began to feel strangely interested

in this energetic woman with the clear blue eyes and bold firm voice. Her face reminded him curiously of one that he had seen elsewhere, but whether in life or in a book he could not remember. He said nothing, but encouraged her by his attitude to continue.

"After centuries of oppression, of misgovernment, of corruption, of tyranny, it is not strange that sensible and logical persons should come to the conclusion that the old order of things needs changing. Extremists like ourselves believe that it should be annihilated."

Pleasant remembered now where he had seen a face like that of the lady addressing him. It was the portrait of a young Nihilist, a Russian woman, who had been sentenced to exile in Siberia for conspiring against the existing order of things. He had seen this portrait in an English illustrated paper only a few weeks ago. And now he understood clearly that he had stumbled upon a Nihilist conspiracy. Was the musician, with his dreamy, poetic temperament, a conspirator? Was this charming young lady an apostle of destruction? Was this hideous old man a member of the secret band which had sworn that the Russian autocracy should perish from the face of the earth?

"You have seen a farmer burn over a patch of land so that fresh and delicate herbage might spring up on it, have you not?" said the lady, twisting her cigarette daintily. "Well, that is precisely what we propose to do. And it is that which you should be willing to help us to do, since you, like us, are profoundly convinced that society in its present condition is unfit to endure."

Pleasant made no answer. He felt that there was none to be made. He was receiving a lecture; the lady was explaining an important subject to him, and he must listen in silence. Something touched his arm. He looked around. It was Stanislas, who called his attention to a

stool placed near him. Pleasant sat down, and the lady continued —

"Brother Stanislas and I, though born in Russia, are partly of Polish stock; there is perhaps a little Semitic blood in our veins. Ignatius, here, is a Polish Jew. The social question in Russia is more pressing, the position is more intolerable there than elsewhere. We are members of the company that is working for the destruction of Russian society as it exists. On its ashes and ruins we, or those who survive us, can and will build something better. Why should you not do the same in your own land? Why should you submit to the extermination of your race? As society is at present constituted you can make no successful resistance within its limits to the sort of injustice of which you complain. You are caught in the machinery, and you will be crushed unless the machinery is instantly — stopped!"

She arose with a light laugh, which had the ghost of a cry of lamentation hidden in it. As she uttered the last words she made an upward sweeping gesture with both hands. Pleasant fancied that he could see the whole fabric of society whirling in shattered fragments into air. The lady took a light for her cigarette and began smoking. The Indian could not take his eyes from her; he had never seen such a woman as this before.

"It suddenly occurs to me," said Stanislas, "that I have not formally presented you to my sister. Mr. Merrinott, of the — how do you call your country? — the Indian Nation, is it not? — allow me to introduce you to Mademoiselle Vera, lately student in medicine at the University of Zurich."

Pleasant arose, and found it necessary to say something. He stammered out a compliment as to the clear manner in which Vera expressed her views, and added, after some hesitation —

"We certainly agree as to the necessity for a complete change in the social order of things; but I am not quite sure that we agree as to the means of accomplishing that change. I have heard and read a right smart bit about Nihilism, and I must confess that ——"

"My son," said the old man, shuffling forward, and casting timorous glances behind him, as if the sound of his own voice filled him with terror, "did you ever hear of Michael Bakounin?"

"I do not at this moment remember who he was."

"I knew him," said the old man with emotion. "I knew him for many, many years. I have talked with him for hours when he was a refugee in London. I have talked with him here in Switzerland, here where he died. He was a demi-god. The mould in which he was made was broken when he was created."

"Well," said Stanislas, peevishly, "why do you not at once explain to Mr. Merrinott that Michael Bakounin was the founder of that doctrine which the world calls Nihilism?"

"Ah! ha!" said the old man. "Nihilism is a phrase, which is often enough misused, and which allows of a thousand misunderstandings. Michael Bakounin used no such clumsy Latin. He was no phrase-monger; but he planted in the souls of certain men and women the conviction that there must be a new world, founded upon the ruins of the old one, and that those men and women must be filled with the fury for destruction of the old forms in order that they or their successors might have the delight of creating new and better ones. He impressed it upon all that the destruction *must* come. His was no narrow doctrine, applied to a corner of Europe; it was for the whole world, and is as good for you, my son, as for me." The ancient Polish Jew spoke passionately, and his eyes lighted up his face with the expression which Pleasant

had observed when he had first seen him through the open door.

"Yes," said Stanislas, catching some ashes from the end of his cigarette in his left hand, and tossing them lightly away, "I think that it was a mistake to call Bakounin a Nihilist. The term did not define the nature of the man. He was a magnificent optimist."

"Destruction, my son," continued the old man, without noticing the remark by Stanislas, "Destruction was his primary aim. First that, then the rebuilding. And that is the doctrine which you ought to help to carry out if you wish to see wrongs righted and the people triumphant. It is of no use to dream of reforming society. Mow it down — it cumbers the ground!"

Pleasant was astonished at the energy and earnestness of the Jew. He recoiled a little from the forcible expression of sentiments which he had himself now and then momentarily, but never very seriously, entertained. He looked at each of the trio as if he expected three answers to the questions which he finally asked —

"And how and when is the great explosion which is to destroy Russian society to take place? Will you not find your programme difficult to carry out?"

The Jew smiled triumphantly, and took from its concealment the small and shining mechanism of which he seemed so proud. He held it up, so that the light rested once more upon it for a moment; then he moved away to a corner with it, and placed it in a shadowed nook.

"You have seen the clock of destiny," he said. "When you hear that it has struck the hour of the destruction, remember that you once saw it in old Ignatius's hands. I have spent a lifetime upon it. When it strikes the earth will shake, and Russian society will relapse into the chaos out of which it sprang. Let us say no more about it." And he glanced around the miserable room again, as if

he expected to see a regiment of soldiers march through the wall.

"You are more than usually nervous to-day, Ignatius," said Vera. "Have you seen anything to justify all this apprehension?"

"What is there to fear?" inquired Pleasant. "Are you in any danger in Switzerland? Are you not at liberty to talk as you please in this free country?"

"We are always in danger of expulsion," remarked Vera. "The Russian Government has many agents in Switzerland, and they are not idle. And I fear that if the nature of Ignatius's mechanical labours were known, he would not be long at liberty. He does not tremble for himself, but quakes with terror when he thinks that the precious machine may be confiscated before it has done its work. As for Stanislas and myself, we dread discovery chiefly because it would impair our usefulness. We are not suspected of any connection with the revolutionary movement in Russia, and we therefore communicate readily with persons who are in that country and at work for us. If we were discovered, they would be found out, and you have perhaps heard how conspirators are punished in Russia. Besides, it is our duty to cloak our movements, for we do not know at what moment the revolutionary committee may call us to enter the Russian Empire for work there, and we should be mortified to be arrested at the frontier, on the report of some police spy domiciled in Switzerland."

"Yes, mortified first, and marched off to Siberia on foot next, if not hanged outright," said Stanislas. "We are wise to take precautions, you see!"

"Precautions!" said Pleasant. "Excuse me for saying that you seem to me to have been extremely incautious, in my case at least. You have told me your secret, and yet you have no guarantee that I will not betray you."

"Your face is your guarantee, Mr. Merrinott," said the musician. "Your face and your race. Your interest lies with us. Fate has brought you to our door. Fate intends that we shall work together. You will not betray us. See, even Ignatius, who distrusts his own knife and fork, believes in you. We receive you as our friend. Your sentiments are ours. The words which you spoke in the garden at Meiringen were almost the exact formula of our revolutionists. Come, Mr. Merrinott, we will not ask you to own yourself a conspirator, but I think you must confess that you are a good disciple of the lamented Bakounin!"

"Perhaps I am," said Pleasant, who was watching Vera, as she inhaled the smoke of her fragrant cigarette. He was giddy and excited; the air of the room seemed poisoned; he longed for a breath of the cool breeze from the hills. He was greatly relieved when the lady arose and said —

"I will leave the house first, and by the passage to the left. Perhaps Mr. Merrinott will do well to go about ten minutes afterwards, taking the right; and you, Brother Stanislas, can come along later. We shall meet again, Mr. Merrinott; good day."

The Jew held the door open for her, and she vanished airily into the shadows.

"And now, my dear Indian," said the musician, "we will drop conspiracy for the present. Forget what we have said for a time, and when you call upon us —— You will not leave Berne to-day?"

"No, not for some days, perhaps."

"Then come and see us at that address" (he handed him a card) "to-morrow afternoon, if you feel inclined. We will have some music; and should we chance to meet any of our friends from Meiringen, remember that I am in Berne to visit my sister, who is studying here — for a day

or two only, and that my sudden decision not to go to London was due to my desire to spend some time with her. An artistic caprice, eh! I think you can make my excuses, in case we happen to meet the Harrelstons, or Miss Caro and her mother, can you not?"

"You will be able to make your own explanations, I am sure," said the Indian. He took the green paper which he had found on the stairs of the hotel at Meiringen from his pocket, and handed it to the musician. "I suppose you have not missed this," he said. "Allow me to return it to you."

Stanislas took the letter, and looked keenly into Pleasant's frank open eyes. "Thank you," he said, with his disagreeable smile. "I am glad it was one of *us* who picked this up."

Pleasant was glad when he got away from Stanislas, after he had promised to call upon him the next day, and was once more under the open sky. He returned as fast as he could to the high cathedral platform, and sat down beneath the trees. The more he reflected upon the conduct of Stanislas and the lady called Vera, the more inexplicable it seemed to him. What could they have hoped to gain by thrusting their confidence upon him? He remained absorbed in reflection until the shadows began to fall on the far-away mountains, and he was surprised to find that the destructive theories of Bakounin were constantly uppermost in his mind.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN THE CATHEDRAL.

WHEN Pleasant returned at last to the hotel, and ordered his supper — for the young Indian refused definitely to adopt the civilized habit of dining at six o'clock — the waiter offered him a ticket for the evening organ concert at the cathedral. Pleasant took the modest cardboard abstractedly, paid for it without looking at it, put it in his pocket, and forgot it entirely until, an hour later, he went out to stroll in the town. The sky was not dull, and the air was warm, but Pleasant, who was weather-wise, felt that a storm was at hand. The mighty Alps had withdrawn behind their curtain. Pleasant went through the narrow streets and across the little squares to the cathedral platform, hoping that he might catch one more glimpse of the snow-clad peaks, and he was disappointed when he found that they had vanished. He was about to take his old place on the stone bench, and to fall into reverie again, when he thought of the concert.

As soon as the darkness had fallen, he went into the cathedral, and walking down the long aisle, found a seat in a dark corner, where he could lean against one of the huge reading-desks. A few tourists were scattered over the wilderness of benches, and a suppressed twitter, like that of birds in their nests at twilight, informed him that

there were women in the audience. Presently a Russian family, consisting of a picturesque mamma, three daughters, representing as many different shades of complexion and costume, and a tall, whiskered papa, came so near to Pleasant that he could observe them. Then a heavy-footed English squire, with a tall wife in yellow ulster and a pea-green head-dress which was a species of compromise between a turban and a night-cap, went past the Indian. Two American boys, redolent of cigarettes, and "chaffing" the solemnity of the cathedral in audible tones, wandered hither and yon as freely as if they were in a railway station. Lastly, and just as Pleasant had almost decided to close his eyes and shut out these intruders from his vision, he heard a loud whisper on the other side of the desk.

"I tell you, Caro," said the voice, "I see Stanislas comin' up the little hill from the river, not ten minutes after we got to the hotel. I was lookin' out of the winder in search of them mountains 't they say you can see from here, but that nobody most never does see, and my eyes fell on to *him*. I don't believe he had any idee of goin' to London. There's somethin' queer about that young man, Caro, and I think if he can't explain himself we must manage to see less of him."

"Genius is always eccentric, mother."

"Genius don't need to tell lies, does it? I don't care about this particular time, 'cause it ain't none of our business whether he goes to London or not; but his actions only make me cling on firmer 'n ever to the suspicions that I've had of him from the very first time that I set eyes on him."

"It seems to me, mother, that you find pleasure in suspecting every foreigner——"

"So I do, and they deserve it, especially the men. An' I tell you, once for all, Caro Merlin, that when we get back to Paris, I ain't goin' to have any more of them

black-moustached, bowin', and scrapin' fellers around. Now remember that! It's bad enough for my daughter to have to associate with them that teaches music without havin' any of the useless sort about her. If you're beginnin' to think that American young men ain't good enough for you, I think you'd better go home right now, before you get your taste spiled; that's what I think!"

"Dear me, ma," whispered Caro, "you needn't be so emphatic. Perhaps if the American young men took a little more trouble to present themselves, I should find them agreeable enough. But you must admit that we don't see much of them."

Mrs. Merlin made no answer to this, for it coincided exactly with her own observation. But a moment afterwards she said —

"There's no men like American men. They don't bow and scrape so much as foreigners, but they won't crowd a woman off from the side-walk into the mud, and they don't treat us as if we was inferiors. Then look at their style! Now, there's the Injun — Mr. Merrinott — *he's* what I call a *man!* What say?"

These last two words were whispered in a louder key than the others, and in a defiant manner, as if Mrs. Merlin were already anticipating dissent from her proposition, and had determined to meet it half-way.

"Mr. Merrinott is manly enough, mother," observed Caro, "but then he's provincial. You can see it in his language, and his clothes, and his manners — downright provincial ——"

"Provincial granny!" interrupted Mrs. Merlin. "So are you, and so be I — and I hope we always will be. I declare, Caro, I have a good mind to take you right straight ——"

"Ma! don't you hear the music? Sh—h!"

Pleasant was amused at this conversation, which he

could not help overhearing. He was glad, too, that he had heard Miss Caro's criticism. Provincial! that meant common and vulgar, probably; at least, it was evident that he did not compare favourably with the polished and accomplished gentlemen whom Miss Merlin was accustomed to meet, and for whom her mother appeared to entertain much contempt. The Indian found himself thinking of Alice, and wondering if she had made the same remark. Alice! Had she left Meiringen with Mrs. Merlin and her daughter? Perhaps she was in the cathedral at that moment, and he could see her — be near her once more. The thought filled him with delight, and he listened to the organ's eloquence with a sense of contentment quite new to him. After the concert he would meet the Merlins at the door, and from them would ask news of Alice and her mother. *Now* he was glad that his Indian friends had asked him to remain in Europe for the present.

Pleasant thought that the music which came drifting down from the organ-loft seemed strangely familiar to him. It was full of echoes from the mountains, the torrents, the wind-swept valleys, the grassy plains, the wooded and rocky glens. Caro but expressed his own thought, when she whispered to her mother, just as a thunderous burst of harmony was succeeded by a gently melodious ripple —

"That's Stanislas at the organ, and he's playing his new Grimsel Symphony."

The Indian heard Caro's whisper, and his interest in the music at once became intense. The new light which had been cast upon the character of Stanislas by his unexpected interview with Pleasant that afternoon gave everything which the musician did an added interest and importance in the Indian's eyes. Had Stanislas two souls — one filled with tender love for nature and endowed with almost infinite capacity for expressing her charm, her

beauty, her mystery; the other discontented, angry with the world and its follies and meannesses, and hungry for a vast social reform to be inaugurated only after the old order of things had been swept back into the chaos whence it sprang? Into which had the man put all the terrible sincerity of which he was capable — his art, or his doctrine of destruction? In his music he seemed to say that life was sweet, that clouds, suns, stars, imperial mountains and delicious vales, the odours of wild plants, and the colours of stony crags were all parts of a grand harmony which he enjoyed and adored. Would he bring into this harmonious symphony any complaint, any protest against man and men's injustice? Pleasant listened in vain for the slightest hint of discontent. It was probable that Stanislas established a broad distinction between the physical and the social world; that he adored the former with a passionate fervour which was quite pagan, and that he hated the latter, and sought refuge from the very thought of it in the contemplation of the eternal hills and the unapproachable dome of the sky. So thought Pleasant as he listened, and, thinking thus, his respect for the musician increased.

The symphony was too long for a concert intended mainly for the display of a great organ's capacities to a party of impatient tourists, and Stanislas — who had stolen into the organ-loft, and requested the favour of playing one piece — stopped short in the midst of the superb theme, and yielded his place to the bewildered musician, who was accustomed to play Mendelssohn's "Wedding March," and a "Storm in the Alps," with imitation of the Alp-horn, but who had never, in his best moments, dreamed of such grand and imaginative flights as those of Stanislas. While the regular organist went tranquilly through his accustomed task, Stanislas stood looking down upon the scattered audience, and nervously straining his eyes at the

blackness below. The creative mood was upon him; he felt a regret that he had left the organ, and an almost irresistible desire to ask permission to return to it.

Circumstances aided him. Just as a murmur of admiration arose from the listeners at the close of the conventional piece in which the *Ranz des Vaches* is introduced, and the whistling of winds and fall of avalanches are imitated, a real storm broke with fury over the city of Berne, and raged about the old church and its lofty "platform" and towers with startling vehemence. Pleasant was delighted; his soul rejoiced in this apparent protest of Nature against the efforts of an ordinary man to imitate her grand effects. Stanislas interpreted correctly and with sufficient impressiveness; but this feebler and less learned man who had endeavoured to pourtray storm and calm was rendered ridiculous by contrast with the real excitement of the elements. The organist had the good sense not to begin another selection while the wind and the lightning and the echoes of the thunder were engrossing the attention of his audience. Now came a flash which brought out in clear and forcible splendour, for an instant, against the background of darkness, the richly coloured figures in the stained-glass windows in the choir; and now a great wind seemed to shake the walls of the church. Then came the patter of rain, and then crackling thunder which made the Russian mamma and her daughters cross themselves, and which prompted Caro to whisper nervously —

"Isn't it magnificent, mother? It's like the day of judgment! See! You might imagine that those figures of the apostles and prophets in the stalls, over yonder, when the lightning brings them out so vividly, are springing up to answer the signal for resurrection! Oh! if Stanislas would only play again!"

"It'll be dretful walkin' back to the hotel," remarked

Mrs. Merlin, who did not share her daughter's fancies, and who was distressed because she had not brought her umbrella.

"Don't be so prosaic, ma!" said the girl, speaking aloud in her vexation. "If you don't find this romantic, I shall believe there is no poetry in your soul!"

"There ain't, not the least leetle drop. I give it all to you when you was born," responded the mother, meekly; "and all I hope is that you won't let your romantic notions run away with your common sense. My goodness! ain't it never goin' to stop rainin'?"

"Oh, I wish it would rain for ever, and that the wind would roar on for a hundred years, and that the lightning would flash, flash, flash!" whispered Caro, excitedly. "If I were a genius like Stanislas, how I should love to sit up there in the organ-loft and answer back thunder with peal after peal from the grand old pipes and keys! Ah! how glad I am! How grand! He is going to play again! It takes a storm to rouse the soul of Stanislas!"

Caro arose, her face pale and her eyes dilated, and if her mother had not plucked at her skirts, and peevishly besought her not "to make a fool of herself," she might perhaps have burst forth into song, for she was under the influence of a strange excitement, which rendered her insensible to mere proprieties. Mrs. Merlin trembled when she saw Caro in one of these exalted moods. At such times her daughter seemed to pass beyond her control, and to be insensible to reason. In these moments Mrs. Merlin adored her daughter, but hampered the girl's spirit most cruelly with cautious, wise sayings, and sharp remarks intended to bring her down from the ideal realm into which she had arisen to the plainer and less dangerous regions of reality.

"Sit down, child," said Mrs. Merlin; "you make my bones ache when you jump about so. I wish to

goodness we hadn't come here. You'll be worn out to-morrow!"

She hushed the hoarse whisper in which she was uttering these remarks, for Caro sat down, and with an imperative gesture commanded silence. Her eyes had a far-away look, like those of one who walks abroad in a dream; her lips were slightly parted; her hands were clenched. The rushing wind outside made one or two violent sallies against the walls of the old cathedral, and then seemed to retire discomfited. The rain went on with the wind, and their splendid heralds, the lightning and the thunder, preceded them. The storm had passed beyond the church and the high stone "platform," and swept down upon the river valley.

Caro was right in supposing that Stanislas had taken his seat at the organ once more. In the frenzy of his desire for expression, this noble artist, whose imagination ran riot whether he swept his lithe fingers over the keys of a piano, or trod the pedals and handled the stops of an organ, forgot the audience, the organist, who stood humbly at his side, the time, the place, everything, except the voices in his soul. With skill and emphasis he outlined in a few broad preliminary phrases the subject which he wished to create, and then, plunging madly into his work, he poured forth for more than half an hour his new improvisation. The listeners quickly perceived that it was no ordinary man who, thus departing from the usual limits of the concert, had entered upon a second *grand morceau*, for few of them thought that it was to be anything else, and they pricked up their ears. When they discovered that Stanislas was reproducing the glories of the storm which had just passed over the church, they were amazed, and the complete success with which he rendered the effects of nature almost frightened the devout among the women, who feared that a wizard was at the organ. Pleasant was

deeply impressed; he felt that Nature had challenged Stanislas to a test of grandeur, and that the musician had fearlessly accepted the challenge. As the player drew near the close of his interpretation he interwove bits of melody with the wandering voices of the wind and the rain, and soothed the spirits of those whom he had so strangely excited. But this was done in order to render more imposing the surprise which he had prepared for the final passage. It was massive, tremendous, filled with thunderous bursts which seemed to Caro's heated imagination to shake the cathedral; with discordant cries of despairing spirits; with melodious trumpet-blasts of angelic hosts; with majestic marches of supernatural battalions; with fugues fit to express the wailing of the lost millions; and with chants which seemed to drift downward from the inner and unseen heavens.

"I knew it! I knew it!" whispered Caro, grasping her mother's hand. "It's the Day of Judgment that he's describing. It couldn't be anything else."

"Mercy on us! the girl's mad!" cried Mrs. Merlin, quite forgetting her caution.

But no one heard her, for Stanislas drowned every other sound at that moment under the organ thunder — playing two or three more wild, short passages, which might have been thought to indicate the final disruption of the heavens and the earth, and their return to primal chaos. Then, jumping down from the stool, he was half way out of the organ-loft before his alarmed fellow-musician had made up his mind whether this strange man were angel or fiend.

The audience sat spell-bound for a minute or two, then arose, and began to move slowly towards the door, as if there could not possibly be anything more on the programme after all that they had just heard. Pleasant, from his shaded corner, was surprised to see Mrs. Merlin

clinging to Caro's arm, and chiding her most energetically.

The girl's face was white. "Let me go, mother," she said, hoarsely. "Don't stop me *now*. You may scold me later. I must go to him. I must tell him — I must praise him. Come! can't you see that he is a demi-god, a genius? Oh, mother, you haven't the slightest particle of artistic sense!"

Mrs. Merlin released her hold on her daughter's arm, and sank back on the bench. She looked at Caro for a moment, then, bursting into tears, she sobbed —

"Dear me, Caro, you'll worry me to death! You think your poor old mother hasn't got no poetry, nor no artistic sense, nor no no-o-othin', an' you leave her to run away after a foolish foreign musician, just because you think he's ben playin' the Judgment Day! I'm astonished that you — you — you should be so wicked! Caro! Come here to me!"

Caro drew herself up to her full height, and gazed at her lachrymose mamma with a curious expression of mingled tenderness and scorn.

"This is the second time, mother," she said, "that you have shown distrust of me. I hope it will be the last." She was still greatly excited, and her eyes sparkled.

Pleasant, looking out from his shaded seclusion, thought that she made a pretty picture.

"But, daughter, I don't like to see you give way to your feelin's so — so dretfully. It makes me all of a tremble. Good gracious! there's Stanislas now, comin' down the aisle, with another man with a lantern, showin' him around. I suppose now we shall *have* to speak to him."

She rose and went to meet him. Caro stood looking after her mother as the good soul greeted Stanislas. "It is strange," whispered the girl, "that mother should

suddenly be so absurd about Stanislas! Poor old ma! I wonder what she thought he made the organ say."

Stanislas came striding up to her a minute later, and had taken her hand and held it gently for an instant before Mrs. Merlin could overtake him.

"It was grand," said the girl. "It was wonderful. I thought I saw the earth open, and the dead rise, and the heavens unrolled. It was the Judgment that you described at the close, wasn't it?"

The musician gave her a look of delighted surprise.

"Of course it was. The text of my symphony is written in stone over the door of the cathedral. The Day of Judgment in stone. I studied the quaint groups for a whole hour yesterday; and then that storm scene to-night seemed to inspire me! How kind, how sympathetic you were to understand me! Mrs. Merlin, your daughter always comprehends me!"

Caro said nothing, but stood trembling a little, with her eyes cast down.

Pleasant saw that it was not a convenient time to introduce himself anew to the Merlins, so he stole quietly away through the shadows.

"And, now tell us," said Mrs. Merlin, "how it happens that you are not givin' concerts in London, instead of scarin' us half to death with Judgment Days in the cathedral at Bèrne?"

CHAPTER XIV.

ON THE SCHAËNZLI.

NEXT day the sun shone forth gloriously, and Pleasant awoke from a dream in which Alice, the Cherokee Indians, railway bonds, organ music, the sensuous, passionate face of Stanislas, and the shrewd, suspicious features of the old Polish Jew, were strangely mingled. While he was dressing, it suddenly occurred to him that he was not the same man who had arrived at Interlaken, eager to make his bitter protest against the wrongs inflicted on his race. He looked rather critically at his clothes; they were a trifle worn, and perhaps "provincial" in cut. Miss Caro's criticism burned in his mind. His hat, too, offended his sense of propriety, and he resolved to exchange it that very morning for a better one. He shook out his long black locks, inspected himself carefully, and went down into the garden. The waiter who came to serve him his coffee was yawning, for it was very early. He gave Pleasant a quizzical look, and said, in his variegated English —

"There was three lady to inquire after Monsieur last night. They saw Monsieur's name on the register-board."

"Three ladies? Who were they?"

The servant mentioned the names of Mrs. and Miss Merlin, and Miss Harrelston. Pleasant started so violently

on learning that Alice had arrived in Berne that the waiter grinned, and added —

"The lady they inquire when Monsieur is going away."

"I shall see them to-day," said the Indian, in such a sharp tone that the grin faded from the waiter's face, leaving a look of apprehension there instead.

Pleasant took his light breakfast hastily, then started out for a walk, his cheeks tingling with excitement, and his heart beating as if he had been engaged in a struggle. It hurt his pride to think that he must meet Alice again after he had bidden her good-bye at Meiringen, and after she had fancied him hastening, like a bold and energetic crusader, over land and sea, on his mission.

He walked rapidly through the town until he came to a great gate, on either side of which were statues of colossal bears which seemed to regard him with malicious air as he passed near them. The cool morning breeze dispelled the fever in his cheeks, and he began to feel more at ease. He crossed the Aar on a bridge hung high above the transparent water, and climbed a wooded hill, which the good burghers of Berne call the "Schaënzli," and which they long ago adopted as one of their principal pleasure resorts. It rises abruptly from the chain of bluffs on the bank opposite the main portion of the city, and is crowned with a delightful wood, in the shadows of which the Bernese young men and maidens like to wander arm-in-arm in summer evenings, when the music of Strauss and Gungl echoes from the terraces above, or when the winds from the snow-clad mountains in the distance bring a delicious coolness to the romantic knoll. At the summit there is a rustic theatre and restaurant fronting upon a high terrace, from which one can look down on Berne and the river, the rows of ancient houses huddled together, the long lines of poplar trees, and away

beyond the city the sweet sweep of green and yellow fields, the comfortable broad-roofed farm houses, and the Alps, white and glittering. Here in summer idlers of all nations pass a few pleasant hours, lulled to reverie by the breezes, and fascinated by the atmosphere of perfect peace. The old town of Berne seems to doze beside its beloved Aar; there is no whirl of machinery, no hum of traffic, no brawl of voices; it rests the eyes of a world-weary man to look upon the place.

Pleasant was too young and too inexperienced to be world-weary, but he enjoyed the view from the terrace, because all the parts of the picture were harmonious and soft in colour. Many places in Europe offended his eye. He thought — although possibly he would have been puzzled to express his thought — that the uncultivated and savage nature of his own Indian Territory was infinitely superior in beauty to the over-trimmed, subjugated valleys and plains in some portions of Europe. The absence of wooded hills and of the luxuriant forest growth of a new country annoyed him; the land seemed naked and ashamed. So, too, he thought that stone houses, with their cold fronts abutting directly upon the streets, and with their windows protected by iron bars and gratings, had an inhospitable air; he was much fonder of the wooden houses of America, with their inviting porches and their many-windowed sides, and their gardens, which needed no massive walls garnished with broken glass and iron spikes. But Berne did not impress him so grimly as other European towns, and he leaned over the terrace railing, and looked down with genuine satisfaction on the hill-sides dotted with villas between patches of ferns and vineyards, and the steep roads winding among rows of stout trees, and on the reflections of the old houses in the water. There was but one thing needed to make the scene perfect in Pleasant's view, and that was the figure of Alice Har-

relston. If he could but see her as he saw her for a moment on the slopes of the Brunig, when she raised her eyes to meet his, and to ask him about his plans for the future!

He was half inclined to believe that his Fate had answered his prayer, and had sent Alice to the Schaënzli, for, in a corner of the terrace, with her back turned toward him, sat a young lady busily sketching. Love is a strange enchanter; it persuades us that we see everywhere the object of our adoration; and the impulsive Indian had walked half-way to where the lady sat before he could convince himself that it was not Alice. He paused suddenly, for the feminine artist had a quick ear, and although Pleasant had an Indian foot, and trod as lightly as a deer, she heard his step and looked around. A shadow settled over the young man's brow. He had recognized the resolute young woman whom he had met with Stanislas on the previous day — the energetic and mysterious disciple of Bakounin.

He felt that he would be glad to retreat, but it was too late, for the lady smiled pleasantly, and gathering up her sketching materials arose and held out her hand. There was a bit of colour in her cheeks, which had been so colourless the day before; and the stern face was almost pretty as it welcomed Pleasant, with its clear blue eyes, in which the light of laughter was, however, something like that delicate shimmer which hangs above the crater of a volcano. Her simple straw hat had slipped back from her head, and disclosed her open brow — almost too broad for that of a woman, and her thick hair, parted in masculine fashion. She greeted Pleasant as unaffectedly and with as little evidence of surprise as if he were an old friend whom she had been expecting to meet at that particular time and place. He listened in vain for any trace of foreign accent in the English which she spoke fluently.

The only peculiarity which would have betrayed her as a foreigner was a slight drawl, not unpleasant in itself, but natural neither to English nor Americans. It was not an accent; it was a manner.

They shook hands. Vera's palm was feverish, but her grasp was hearty, like that of a man. This was not a feminine, yielding, shrinking, receptive nature, but an aggressive, bold, warm, self-asserting one. It was odd that the moment the disciple of Bakounin touched his hand he felt as if she had a certain power over him. It was as if she had instantaneously re-established the sympathy which had been manifested at their first meeting. He was a little disturbed at this discovery.

"Early abroad, Mr. Merrinott, like myself," she said, merrily. "I am glad to find that you do not, like most tourists, spend the best part of your mornings in bed. Among these Swiss hills these first hours of the day are sublime. See! I have been trying — but oh! with such poor success! — to make a small transcript of that corner down below, the houses and the trees and the reflection — see!" And she held up a sketch rather prettily executed in water colours.

"I am glad, Miss ——"

"Call me Vera now," she said; "that is, if it does not shock your Anglo-Saxon proprieties to do so. For — you remember — we are comrades now." Her blue eyes grew stern, and the smile faded out of them, but came back timidly a moment afterwards.

"Well, Miss Vera," said Pleasant, "I think your sketch is very good indeed." And he did think so, although, truth to tell, it was but a sorry bit of art; for Vera's mind, while she sketched, had been absorbed with thoughts quite foreign to the beauties of nature on the banks of the Aar.

"You flatter me," she said. "Have you seen brother

Stanislas this morning? He gets out early, as we do. He is in one of his poetic moods, with a craze for composition, and I have given up all hope of getting his attention for anything practical to-day."

"No; I heard him in the cathedral last night, driving the listeners wild with his strange fancies."

"Yes, I saw you there," said Vera. "I was not far from you, but so enveloped in darkness that you did not suspect my presence. I think Stanislas was half crazy or half inspired. His music was grand. Do you know"— she lowered her voice — "that when he has been in a creative mood for a day or two he acquires a distaste for our work — our life-work — you understand what I mean — and sometimes I am inclined to be half jealous of his music?" She hesitated a moment; then, pulling her hat forward on her head, and, tugging at its ribbons with one hand, she added, "For, possibly, if he did not have music as a means of expressing his tremendous passion, he would put more force into *the* work — do you not think so? Or do I misjudge him? They say it is dangerous to be a person of one idea, and perhaps I am wrong in concentrating all my attention upon — you understand! But pshaw! I can think of nothing else — dream of nothing else. — Do get a chair and sit down, Mr. Merrinott."

Pleasant obeyed, mechanically.

"Do you suppose I have been thinking of that sketch while I have been making it?" she said, scornfully, holding it up, as she sat down again. "Not at all. And of what was I thinking? Of a small village near the Polish frontier of Russia — a straggling village of one long street, with but few houses worthy of the name of 'residence.' Cabins — much dirt — poverty sharply contrasted with a rude kind of provincial magnificence. Snow on the ground."

She stooped and laid her sketch upon the grass at his

feet, and Pleasant, looking at it, fancied that he could see the picture which she was now describing gradually taking the place of the houses, graceful trees, and sunlit water which she had copied. She went on gravely.

"In front of one of the houses is a procession of men and women, chained like criminals. And criminals they are considered, because the Russian Government has doomed them to exile. To exile — and for what? For supposed sympathy — only half proven — with an abortive Polish insurrection along the border. But not for that alone, oh no! For a graver offence. For filling the heads of the peasants round about with new ideas; for telling them some few things about representative government, and a State in which even the humblest individual can have some influence; for preaching to them. Ah! And for these terrible offences a powerful government punishes — how? It comes into the small village — makes arbitrary arrests — imprisons honest people for months in loathsome dens. It takes them from the prisons only to condemn them to exile, and to start them in procession over the frozen land to Siberia. Yes; I can see that procession now. And why do I see it — why is it before my eyes night and day? Because my father and mother are in it, and my mother is chained by the wrist to a woman who is guilty of a vile crime — of the murder of her babe!"

Vera's face was white. She had not raised her voice above a low tone, but Pleasant heard every word distinctly.

"That was many years ago," she said. "But the colours of that picture are still fresh in my mind. The monstrous injustice of that exile are always in my thought. And that is but one of many instances. The same policy is still pursued; the same remorseless crushing forces are at work. Do you wonder that we believe in Bakounin?"'

"No," he answered, "it does not astonish me. I only think that you will find his doctrines hard to carry out."

"And what would you do?" said Vera, with a certain scorn in her voice, "if you had such an injustice as that of which I have told you to complain of?"

Pleasant looked at her steadfastly. "I can tell you of a greater injustice than that," he answered. "I can tell you of a procession of thousands of men, women, and children, forcibly removed from lands in America that belonged to them, and driven, in dreary procession, hundreds on hundreds of miles from the homes which they had learned to love, and packed like cattle on new territory assigned to them. I can tell you of the people of my race dispossessed of their own by greedy strangers, who have never taken the trouble to improve or cultivate one-half of the country from which they drove those whom they were pleased to call savages. I can tell you of the broken hearts of men who loved their mountains and valleys as women love their children. I can tell of the mothers who fainted and died on the way into exile. I reckon my grief is as great as yours, for injustice and exile are bitter in America, for Indians driven against their will from the South, which they loved, to the Territories west of the Mississippi River, just as they are bitter on the Polish frontier of Russia, for men and women who believe in national aspirations, in free speech, and in constitutional government."

Vera listened earnestly, and Pleasant submitted to the influence of her blue eyes, which looked candidly and fearlessly into his own. The bond of sympathy was stronger than ever now. He seemed to have gained an ally, and a powerful one, who could counsel, who could set him on the track of vengeance upon the oppressing race. She spoke lower than before, but still with utmost distinctness, as she said —

"Well, Mr. Merrinott, do you propose to let such a wrong go unavenged? Or do you mean to do all that in your power lies to get justice — *justice?*"

There was a sinister ring in her voice. Pleasant found that this question awakened certain grave doubts in his mind. What was it his duty to do? What *could* he do? How could he hope to set things right? He did not answer Vera's question, and, as if she had felt that he would not, she continued —

"You want vengeance; you want justice; you protest; you cry out; your voice is stifled. It is all in vain, Mr. Merrinott. You waste your time. You, Indian, victim of society in America, I, victim of society in Russia, can gain little by protesting. Can we fight society openly? Evidently not. What, then, can we do?" She paused, and raised one hand slowly; then suddenly, with a sweeping, upward gesture, "We can undermine it and blow it into fragments — such minute fragments that they can never be found and put together again. We can sweep it out of existence; it must pay the penalty it has incurred by establishing injustice in place of justice, corruption in place of honesty, tyranny in place of liberty! The old order must perish from the earth, and then we can construct our new world. On the chaos of the past we will build the social temple of which Bakounin has laid the spiritual foundations in our hearts and souls."

Pleasant was greatly impressed. All these sentiments seemed now but as echoes of the thoughts in his own breast — thoughts heretofore vaguely expressed. But a sense of his individual helplessness seemed to overpower him. He smiled bitterly, as he said —

"I am afraid open war — hopeless though it might prove to be — is the only course for my people against the race which oppresses them, and which has hunted them down so remorselessly. The mass of the people of

the United States are too well satisfied with their material condition to believe that anything is to be gained by destroying society and building over again from the foundations."

"Not at all, not at all," said Vera, with a confident air, which excited Pleasant's curiosity. "There are hidden forces at work in the United States, the power of which you cannot calculate. There are movements beneath the surface there which will join in a monstrous upheaval the day that a social revolution succeeds in Europe. The field is the world, my friend; it is not merely Russia or Poland. Do not fancy that brother Stanislas or I would have taken you into our confidence had it been merely a question of the destruction of the present order of society in Russia. Our victory in that country will be followed by explosions in every other land where the conditions demand them. And do they not demand them in America as well as in Russia? You have got a new experiment in government in America, but you still have the old society. No, my friend; have no doubt upon one subject: it is in the countries where the civilization is newest that the theories of Bakounin will first be successfully applied. It is in Russia and America that the explosion will first occur. It is the fresh young nations that will furnish the pioneers in this experiment of establishing a new social order. Do you understand me?"

"I do," said the Indian. He did understand, now; he could see that this rare enthusiast was toiling to draw him into the meshes of a conspiracy which enveloped the whole civilized world, and in which her soul was engaged with a fervour which elicited his admiration. Despite the eloquent manner in which she urged her cause there was, however, something slightly repulsive in it to Pleasant's thinking, and yet irresistible forces seemed momentarily drawing him more and more closely to it. He was about

to stammer forth some inquiries as to how so humble and inexperienced a person as himself could help the cause of the "social revolution" in Russia, when Vera leaned forward, picked up her sketch before he could get it for her, brushed it lightly with a blue handkerchief which she took from the breast pocket of her morning sack, and looking almost archly at him, said—

"Thus endeth the first lesson!"

Pleasant was vexed, but he did not betray his vexation. "You might call this the second lesson, I think," he said; "seems to me I had the first one yesterday."

"Oh no! That was merely your introduction to the schoolmistress. Now, Mr. Merrinott, let us dismiss serious topics for the time being, and I suppose we may admire Nature as much as we like, for we don't propose to destroy that. We shall cut the old picture out of the frame and put a new one in;—we shall never dream of trying to discard the frame. Nature is our friend; it is only society that is our enemy. What a lovely day it is! See how exquisite the green fields are, and the hills are alive with birds! Surely, Mr. Merrinott, as an Indian, you must love Nature!"

"I adore birds, beasts, and the earth and air, I reckon, as much as can be expected of the most romantic savage," said Pleasant. "And I am glad that you don't mean to pull down the universe among your other labours of destruction. I don't think it can be improved upon."

"No; but the manner of enjoying it, and using its benefits, certainly may be. Now, Mr. Merrinott, I positively refuse to seem serious any longer. Ah! a question—a question, Mr. Merrinott, which you perhaps can answer. There is a little American lady in whom my brother Stanislas seems strangely interested: Miss—Miss Merlin. She was in the cathedral last evening. Can you tell me about her? She is but a child, I believe. But Stanis-

las — ah! his heart is very tender. Do you know that I sometimes fear Miss Merlin may distract brother Stanislas from his life-work? You know her; tell me about her."

She applied the blue handkerchief once more to brushing some dust from the water-colour, and brushed so furiously that the delicate fabric caught on a corner of the sketch and fell on the grass. Pleasant jumped from his chair and fell on his knees to recover it; and he was still kneeling, and handing it to Vera, when the sound of voices caused him to look up, and he saw Caro and Alice Harrelston, with their hands filled with wild flowers, coming along the terrace. Mrs. Merlin, indulging in a vehement tirade against the Swiss hills, and the fatigues of climbing them, brought up the rear.

CHAPTER XV.

A WAGER.

Mr. Merrinott arose from his knees without any visible symptoms of discomfiture. It did not occur to him that his attitude might be misinterpreted, and his delight at meeting Alice once more was so genuine that it deadened all other sensations. He came forward, and held out his hand, saying —

"I did not expect the pleasure of seeing you again so soon."

"Wal! if it ain't the Injun!" said Mrs. Merlin, in a stage whisper. "That beats the Dutch!" Meantime she fixed her eyes sharply on Vera, who had arisen and turned to scrutinize the new-comers haughtily and fearlessly. A slight tinge of colour crept into Vera's face as she noticed Caro.

"Really, Mr. Merrinott, we were a little surprised when we heard that you were still here," answered Alice. "You seemed in such haste to return to America on your mission!" There was the faint suggestion of a laugh in her voice. "My hands, as you see, are filled with flowers."

"They are right pretty," said the Indian, leaving Alice in doubt whether he meant the adjective to apply to her hands or the blossoms. "Yes, I have been delayed here. Mrs. Merlin, — Miss Caro, I saw you both in the church

last evening. Were you not surprised to find Stanislas here?"

"Oh, not much," said Mrs. Merlin; "them foreign musicians——"

"Excuse me," interrupted Pleasant, with a vague consciousness that Mrs. Merlin might say something unpleasant, "this lady is — the sister of Stanislas." And he stretched out one hand with a gesture which might be understood to serve as comprehending Vera in the company. Alice and Caro glanced quickly at each other, and Alice blushed.

"Indeed?" said Mrs. Merlin, walking leisurely towards Vera, who had made an indefinable bow, by which she seemed neither to encourage nor to refuse recognition, "I want to know! I never heard Stanislas say that he had a sister."

"My brother, madame," said Vera, "is droll, like all men of genius. No doubt he quite forgets, when in your company, that I exist." Vera was looking at Caro as she said this, and the young girl fancied that the words were meant for her.

"Well, now't I look square at you, I reckon mebbe there is jest a leetle family resemblance," said the old lady, with her usual frankness.

"That is not very strange, is it, madame?" Mrs. Merlin did not disturb Vera's dignity at all. "Oh, my brother has told me all about you, and — I beg your pardon — is not the young lady — your daughter — a charming singer, of whom I have heard Stanislas often speak?" She looked at Caro again, this time smiling so winningly that Miss Merlin came up beside her mother.

"How delightful to love music and to sing!" said Vera. "Do you know that I am quite jealous of you when I hear my brother raving about your voice? Oh! but he does rave! I get no praise from him, because I —

well, I am the pedant of the family. Stanislas says that I could never be a musician. But I love study. I suppose you will be horrified to learn that I have been studying medicine and other things at Zurich?"

Mrs. Merlin opened her eyes widely. "Studyin' to be a doctress, be you?" she said. "Don't you find it rather up-hill work?"

Vera did not exactly understand this English idiom, but when Mrs. Merlin had explained it, she answered, "Well! it is somewhat difficult. I left Zurich and came here to rest for a time, and so Stanislas came to visit me and to cheer me up, although I believe he has a host of professional engagements, which he has taken the liberty of suddenly postponing. But will you not sit down?" Vera was as gracious and dignified as if the terrace of the Schaënzli were the lawn in front of her own country house. "And the other lady?"

Mrs. Merlin turned to Alice, but the young Indian and Miss Harrelston had retired to the middle of the terrace, where stood a glass pavilion, and were busily engaged in conversation.

"That's Miss Harrelston," said Mrs. Merlin. "Perhaps you've heard your brother speak of her."

"I think not," answered Vera. "Is she an American lady? Ah! I fear I am keeping you from her. I was sketching here when the dark gentleman, Mr. Merrinott, to whom my brother introduced me only yesterday, came along, and we have been talking about your wonderful country! Ah! what a blessing to have such a land to claim as one's own!"

"Why, yes," said Mrs. Merlin. "Now, if you're reelly bent on doctorin', the United States offers a much better chance than ——"

"Than Russia? Do you think so? Ah! there are a great many ills to heal in Russia, and physicians of the

right sort are much in demand." Vera gathered up her sketching materials as she talked.

"Don't let us disturb you!" cried Caro. "Please continue your work, and I will sit down and look on."

"Oh, that will be too much honour for my poor sketch," said Vera; but she began unpacking again, and sat down.

"Not so much honour as Mr. Merrinott was paying it when we came up," said Caro, wickedly. "He seemed to be on his knees before it."

"On his knees — yes — not to worship — but to pick up my handkerchief. Do you know," she said, in a whisper, "that he is very impressive — that Mr. Merrinott? He looks like a young Tartar chieftain! And he has a right to look so, for I think there is no doubt that your North American Indians are of Asiatic origin. They must have gone over to America centuries and centuries ago, across that narrow strip of water away in the North — how do you call it? Behring's Straits — is it not?"

"Wal," said Mrs. Merlin, smoothing out the wrinkles in her bonnet-strings, "that is an idee. It's kinder consolin' to think that such dretful critturs as the Injuns are not the natural producks of the North American soil."

"Oh! you must not be uncomplimentary to the Tartars in my presence, even by implication," said Vera, with an odd little smile; "for do you not remember the proverb, 'Scratch the Russian, and you find the Tartar?'"

"But I thought," remarked Mrs. Merlin, looking a little blank, "that I had heard your brother say his mother — I think it was his mother — was Polish, and so you would be ——"

"The Russians, madame, would hardly be willing to admit that there is any such country as Poland, or that the Poles exist. But to come back to the Indian." She

glanced around to satisfy herself that Pleasant was out of hearing range. "Is he not an enthusiast?"

"He is," said Caro. "He is the kind of man to lead a forlorn hope in a battle, or to rebel against a great injustice, even if there were not the slightest hope of successful rebellion."

"Do you think so?" cried Vera, so joyously that Caro and her mother looked quickly at her.

"Yes, he's determined," said Caro's mother, "but it's no use. He might as well butt his head aginst a stone wall as to work at settin' Indian affairs straight."

"That doesn't matter," said Vera. "He is enthusiastic, and enthusiasm is never so beautiful as when it is bestowed upon a hopeless cause."

Mrs. Merlin was puzzled by Vera, but she liked the girl. She felt much relief of mind, also, now that she could see a legitimate reason for the presence of Stanislas in Berne. He had, of course, stopped to visit with his sister; nothing could be more natural or proper. The very fact that he had a sister over whose career he watched revived Mrs. Merlin's respect for him. So she made herself as agreeable as possible to Vera, who seemed the incarnation of frankness, giving picturesque details of her student life in Zurich, and furnishing a vivid impression of her ability to take care of herself. Once or twice, when the girl looked up from her sketch, and fixed her eyes full upon Mrs. Merlin's face, the good woman was a bit disturbed. The imperious boldness of the gaze seemed to reveal a phase of character which Vera usually kept concealed.

While the mother gossiped and listened to gossip, the daughter was studying Vera. She sought in vain in the girl's face for the resemblance to Stanislas which Mrs. Merlin had discovered, and she was dimly conscious of a latent antagonism to Vera, slowly developing itself in her

soul, as if in obedience to an eternal law of the origin or purpose of which she knew nothing. She was willing to like Vera, but a voice cried "Beware!" She felt that she was in presence of a will superior to her own; that Vera had hidden forces which might in emergency be called into play and gain victories for her. In short, Vera was a woman whom she was ready to admire, but not to trust or to love. Deep in Caro's heart was a worship of the genius of Stanislas, the artist, which was ready at a moment's call to develop into love for Stanislas, the man; and even his faults were not without a certain savour in her eyes. The sudden intrusion of this sister upon her attention was not entirely pleasant to her; she was vaguely jealous of her already, before she had known of her existence for more than half an hour. That Stanislas should never have mentioned Vera to her seemed to demand an explanation; yet she would have been puzzled to give a reason for this feeling. She observed that Vera found time, despite her sketching and her conversation with Mrs. Merlin, to look her over most carefully, and she felt that the Russian girl would take away with her a remembrance of every detail of her dress, and each peculiarity of her manner.

Presently they heard a cheerful voice accosting Pleasant and Alice, and Caro instantly recognized it for that of Stanislas. In spite of a strong effort to control her emotion, the tell-tale blood came into her cheeks, and she was half inclined to turn away from the sharp gaze which Vera fixed upon her at that moment. Evidently, thought Caro, Mademoiselle Vera is of a most inquisitive turn of mind.

Stanislas was in splendid humour, and he came up to the ladies, bringing Alice and Pleasant in his train. He seemed to consider it necessary to introduce his sister formally to every one, and congratulated himself and the company on their reunion.

"But we are doomed to separate again almost immediately," said Vera, "for Mrs. Merlin and her daughter leave to-morrow, and ——"

"Of course Miss Harrelston goes with them," said Stanislas.

"And shall we lose you, too?" said Vera to the young Cherokee.

Alice Harrelston looked at Vera, and Vera looked at her. The young American girl was displeased, and Vera knew it.

"I shall go in a few days, I reckon," answered Pleasant.

"But not to America — not to your Indians, Mr. Merrinott," said Alice. "Have you explained to our friends that you have all at once lost interest in your mission? Do you know, Mrs. Merlin, that Mr. Merrinott now talks of a stay in Paris? We shall count you among the lost leaders, sir. We are disappointed; we expected to read exciting telegrams about you, and to hear of glorious deeds done on the frontier."

Pleasant bit his lips. He realized that Alice, actuated by a sudden feminine caprice, was deliberately striving to make him seem ridiculous. This grieved rather than offended him. He made no answer, but Vera said gently —

"Perhaps Mr. Merrinott thinks that he can serve his people better abroad than at home for the present."

This remark heightened Alice's displeasure. Who was this Vera, who came flitting like a shadow across their path? this Vera, beside whom Pleasant had been found kneeling the day after he had seen her for the first time, and who now seemed to know about his plans, and to apologize for him when he turned aside from the straight path of self-appointed duty? A Russian girl, a student of medicine, and the sister of Stanislas. But this was not enough to entitle her to confidence. Suspicion of Vera sprang into Alice's mind the moment that she saw her

face. Instinct told her that that face was pure, virginal, honest; but there was the shadow of a mysterious design upon it, and this it was which made it repugnant to Alice. This, thought the girl, is the face of a woman who might lead such a youth as Pleasant Merrinott very far astray. Her natural charity entered a protest against this judgment, which might prove to have been prejudiced and harsh; but she set her charity sternly aside, and refused to accept Vera until she had made a more careful study of her.

"Do you think that Paris will spoil our savage friend?" said Stanislas, gaily. "Not at all. The odours of the boulevard will teach him to love the perfumes of his forests all the more passionately. When he sees what over-refinement and decaying civilization are worth, he will be glad to return to the simplicity of his native prairies."

"That is right prettily said, Mr. Stanislas; but I'm not entirely sure that I am going to Paris. I — I don't know what I am going to do." Pleasant held out his hands helplessly, as if he were giving up his liberty to his Fate. "I will remain here for the present — until I hear more from the Nation."

"And then — ah! then — you are certain to gravitate to Paris," interrupted Vera. "It is the natural centre for every one who has a cause, a mission, an idea. It is a splendid rallying point. France has not been wrongly called the second country of every man."

"Wal," said Mrs. Merlin, "I *do* think that the French are a mighty sight more interested to reform other nations than they are to improve themselves. It tickles their vanity to think that other folks need settin' to rights, and kinder confirms 'em in their notion that they personally don't need no fixin' over.

"I don't think I should like Paris," said Pleasant. "I

have an idea that I should find it heartless and insincere, and — and all surface. Miss Vera surprises me when she calls it the right place for a man with a mission."

Alice was leaning against the terrace railing, and looking down at some flowers, which she was deftly arranging into a bouquet. Pleasant's criticism made her look up, and he saw that her face wore a pained expression.

"Oh! Mr. Merrinott! how poorly you understand our dear Paris!" she said. "Perhaps after you have been there a few months you will deign to bestow a less severe judgment on the city."

"A few months, Miss Harrelston! Why, in a few months I shall be back among the hills in the Indian Nation, and you all will have forgotten that I or my country are in the world."

"*Voyez l'Americain!* See his impatience break through the crust of European delay," laughed Stanislas. "Why, Monsieur Savage, do you think that the wrongs of an oppressed people can be redressed over night? If you have arrived at any such mistaken conclusion, just give yourself the trouble to call to mind the small nations that have been asking for justice for three or four hundred years — and that still ask in vain."

"And yet many of them are now trying to redress those wrongs by sudden and violent means," said Pleasant, looking sharply at Stanislas.

The musician started involuntarily, but he saw that no one else, except Vera, had understood the allusion.

"I don't think it is right to accuse me of impatience," continued the Indian; "but I stand convicted of indignation!"

"And enthusiasm," added Vera. "Did you not say," addressing Caro, "that Mr. Merrinott is very enthusiastic?"

"Well, is that cause for reproach?" inquired Pleasant. "I reckon you would prefer to see me the conventional Indian — silent as the grave, undemonstrative as a stone ——"

"No no, not so," said Vera, stepping into the middle of the group, and addressing each member of it as familiarly as if she had known them all for years. "But there seems to be — I think we must all admit it — some doubt as to your ability to maintain your enthusiasm at its present height. Some of us think — is it not so? — that the seductions of civilization may turn you aside from your mission. Now, I do not think so, and I shall be curious to see if my convictions in your favour are not justified."

"Ah! but he is forewarned now," said Caro.

"That will neither help nor hinder him," continued Vera. "Brother Stanislas, don't reprove me now. You know I must be allowed my little eccentricities. I am going to — how do you say it? — to lay a wager."

"What! to make a bet? Sister, that is not precisely a feminine habit."

"Never mind; my motive is excellent. I am going to lay a wager of some trifling thing — whatever you please — that six months hence Mr. Merrinott will be found as enthusiastic as ever about his mission, and quite uninjured by his contact with decaying civilization. Six months hence; that will be February — I shall be in Paris — brother Stanislas will be there — shall we not all be there? Don't frown, Mr. Merrinott; we are not impugning your patriotism or sincerity: we are merely speculating as to the influence of society upon you."

Pleasant did frown, but he made no other protest. He was anxious to see what would come of this odd proposition.

"Naturally, if Mr. Merrinott does not remain in Europe

six months, the wager falls to the ground. But if he does, we shall see him, and pronounce upon his progress. Now, who dares wager against me that he will lose this excellent quality of enthusiasm, or that he will unconsciously falter in his mission — and all because of the undermining influences of society? Dare you?" turning to Mrs. Merlin; "or you?" to Caro; "or you?" to Stanislas; "or you?" to Alice, who held a violet which she was about to place in the bouquet in her right hand.

"I dare," said Alice, lightly; "and I will wager a bouquet of violets with you that if Mr. Merrinott remains in Europe six months he will have lost his enthusiasm and abated his interest in his mission."

Pleasant started as if some one had struck him, but he instantly recovered his calmness, and said coolly —

"Who is to decide, at the end of this probationary period, whether I have become worthless or not?"

"Oh, Mr. Merrinott — not worthless; I fear we have offended you," said Vera.

"Not at all. Only I fail to see ——"

"If your enthusiasm for your mission has lessened, you will be the first to admit it when the time for decision comes. Shall we write down the wager?"

Vera smiled as she turned to Alice with this question on her lips; but the smile died away, and gave place to a questioning look, as she saw that Miss Harrelston's face was stern.

"I shall remember. February. Violets. Caro shall be our intermediary," said Alice.

"*Bon Dieu!*" cried Stanislas. "You are as romantic as two ladies of the seventeenth century. Now, Monsieur Indian, you are on probation."

"It's uncomfortable," said the young Cherokee, tossing his long black hair from his shoulders. "Oh, Miss Harrelston," he said, in a low voice, and approaching Alice,

"how could you be so cruel—you who professed to believe in me and in my mission?"

"Because you have already faltered by the way," answered Alice, letting the violet fall from one hand, grasping the bouquet tightly with the other, and raising her eyes slowly to meet his.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ALPINE FIRE.

For the next five minutes Pleasant wished, more earnestly than ever before, that he had been born a full-blooded Indian. He was grievously offended, almost angry. His hands were convulsively clenched, and his lips trembled. He would have been glad to conceal his agitation, and the stoical calm of the children of the forest seemed to him a most precious quality. He felt doubly humiliated now; humbled by Alice's plain expression of her lack of confidence in him, and abased because he could not conceal from her the fact that her action annoyed and distressed him. Had he been a man of the world he would have felt flattered rather than angered by Alice's acceptance of Vera's wager: but he was not a man of the world.

Miss Harrelston's eyes fascinated him. She looked at him proudly, yet earnestly; he was at a loss to decide whether there was most of pride or pity in her gaze. Never had she seemed so beautiful to him as now — at the moment when she had wounded him sorely. A mysterious force drew him slowly toward her; he was feeling in all its power the enchantment of love — that love which causes such exquisite pain, so infinitely preferable to the most refined pleasure. Pleasant felt that he must be alone with Alice; that a word might explain all; that his heart would burst unless there were complete explanation before they separated. Then a blighting suspicion crossed his

thoughts, bringing a chill, as a passing shadow brings a shudder to the wanderer in a sunlit field. Perhaps Alice would cast him aside as a useless acquaintance, a silly adventurer. What claim had he upon her attention?

Stanislas awoke him from this fit of abstraction by inviting the company to go with him to see the bears, in their historic den on the river bank. "After seeing those pleasant animals," said the musician, "we can stroll to my lodgings, where sister Vera shall make you some tea, with a lemon in it, in Northern style, and I will make you some music, if you wish."

"A composition describing the gambols of the bears would not be a bad idea," said Vera gaily, as, aided by Mrs. Merlin, she took up the sketching materials, and led the way toward one of the exits from the Schaënzli Garden.

Caro and Stanislas followed, merrily discussing the possibilities of Vera's suggestion.

"You are coming, of course," said Stanislas to Alice and the young Indian.

"With pleasure," said Alice. "Now, Mr. Merrinott, if you will kindly pick up my violet, and consent to come out of your reverie, we will visit the bears. You ought to tell us some famous bear stories; they are in your line, you know."

"Here is the flower," said Pleasant, bending swiftly and gracefully forward, and picking up the faded little blossom. "It is half crushed and a bit soiled, but if you have no objection, I would like to keep it. When I look at it," he added, rather bitterly, "it will serve to remind me — of my probation."

"Very well," said Alice coldly, "if it will be of use to you for that purpose, you are quite welcome to it." The faint flush in her cheeks, which Pleasant had learned to consider so beautiful, was apparent now.

"I am not likely to forget the manner in which my sincerity has been called in question, whatever else I forget," said the Indian, quite losing his self-control.

The flush faded out of Alice's face. "You are offended, Mr. Merrinott," she said. "I am very sorry that I have hurt your feelings. But I am not entirely to blame. Our new acquaintance seemed so anxious to find some one——"

"Ah! but it need not have been you, Miss Harrelston," interrupted the excited Cherokee. "When you did that, I felt as badly as if you had struck me a blow. It was hard; you misjudged me so suddenly, and right cruelly! A word will explain everything. I have not faltered by the way—nor do I mean to falter. Since arriving here, I have received letters—despatches—which delay my departure. It hurts me to have you think—think me ridiculous."

"I am sure that nothing can ever make me think you ridiculous, Mr. Merrinott," said Alice, moving on more rapidly, for she saw that Pleasant was inclined to stop and enter into a discussion. "That is," she added, with a merry gleam in her eyes, "nothing—unless I should happen to win my wager. It is made, and I suppose that it would be awkward to withdraw from it now. Still, I own that I was hasty and inconsiderate. Will you forgive me?"

"With all my heart," said Pleasant joyously. "I felt proud of your confidence, and when you seemed to withdraw it—you have not wholly withdrawn it, have you?"

"By no means."

"I was profoundly discouraged. Ungallant as it is, I shall do my best to make you lose your wager."

They were some distance behind the others, and as they went along the high road on the hill, with the delicious odour of the new-mown hay floating around them, and as they wound down the steep path to the

street which led beneath the grateful shade of ancient trees to the pit in which the bears, those august guests of the venerable city of Berne, disport themselves, Alice talked of nothing but Stanislas and Vera. The young Indian was compelled to keep a careful watch upon his words, lest in an imprudent moment he should betray the secret of the disciples of Bakounin, and when Alice said —

"But do you not think that the lady is decidedly eccentric?" he answered —

"Highly so. It must be due to her studies, I reckon."

The visitors found the bears very diverting, and expended many pennies in the purchase of turnips and cakes to toss into the maws of the clumsy and comical creatures. Then they went up the hill to a cool cottage where Stanislas and Vera were installed, and where, on a pretty lawn under widespreading trees, after much conversation and laughter, Stanislas ordered lunch to be served. Stanislas disappeared mysteriously, to return shortly in a carriage with Mrs. Harrelston, who had been nursing a headache in her room at the Bellevue, but who was easily persuaded to join the merry-makers. It was no secret that the musician enjoyed a fine revenue from his concerts, and Alice was not surprised to see two smart servants, clad in decorous black, load a table with all the delicacies of the season, with fruits from Italian valleys beyond the Alps, and with white and red wines in dainty long-necked bottles reposing on beds of snow brought from the distant mountains. Mrs. Merlin's eyes rested lovingly on a deep glass dish filled with luscious strawberries, fit for the table of a sovereign.

"I declare," she said to Vera, "I'm glad I come; them berries remind me of home. You're dretful lucky to have such a genius as Stanislas for your brother, Miss ——"

"Call me Vera. Yes, I am very fond of him. Stanis-

las is my only egotism, as Paul de Musset said of his brother Alfred." Vera's eyes were almost dim with tears as she spoke. "And he is very good to me. I do not know what I should be without him."

Caro was studying Vera's face, but vainly. A faint suspicion of the Russian girl was ever present in her heart, yet she sought without success to define it.

"I tell him," continued Vera, "that I shall be very jealous when he takes a wife. And he laughs, and says he shall never marry; that an artist should be wedded only to his art. But I know that some day he will find his heart ensnared, and then I suppose I shall have to take refuge in my studies — in my medicine and my philosophies. I shall try to forgive him, and I presume that I shall succeed."

Stanislas was directing the movements of the servants; Mrs. Harrelston, Alice, and Pleasant were enjoying a view of the river from a corner of the lawn, and Caro and Mrs. Merlin were the only listeners to Vera. The Russian girl did not seem to be looking at anything in particular, but she was studying every movement of Caro's face.

"Wal," said Mrs. Merlin, "I s'pose he don't want to marry when he's travellin' up an' down the universe as much as he is jest now. I don't approve of men's marryin' women an' leavin' 'em to home to wear their souls out waitin' an'— an' imaginin'."

"It is a subject on which we do not often speak," said Vera, continuing, with that idyllic frankness which seemed inseparable from her nature. "But I heard once that my brother lost his heart to a young girl in South America. It was a story, you know, in those wicked newspapers that meddle with everything; and I have sometimes thought that it may have been true."

She saw that Caro's face had grown white, and she added carelessly, as she leaned against a gnarled trunk,

and plucked a spray of grass from a little turf at the base of the tree —

"I do not know why I talk so freely of my brother — unless it is because you are old friends of his. I am afraid you will think that I am what you call in English a chatter-box."

"No, indeed," said Mrs. Merlin, and began a stream of reminiscences about the musician, to which Vera listened with marked attention, all the while slyly watching Caro.

"I hold her secret now," thought Vera; "it was not very hard to discover."

At lunch Vera proved herself a brilliant talker, and she presided at the table with dignity and grace. Mrs. Merlin looked approvingly at her, and telegraphed signals of approbation to Mrs. Harrelston, who seemed of her opinion. Pleasant found himself forgetting that Vera and Stanislas were conspirators, and a grim smile fled over his face as he reflected on the contrast between their sombre doctrine and their present adherence to all the conventional forms and usages of the society which they were labouring to destroy. He would have liked to ask Stanislas, as he noted the refined joy of the musician when he held a glass of golden Rhine wine up, that it might catch the sunlight in its lustrous depths, whether the success of Bakounin's theories would not do much to render the use of costly luxuries a crime.

The afternoon passed swiftly away. The servants placed the piano on a little wooden platform under the trees, and Stanislas played, as Mrs. Merlin expressed it, "like an angel." Then Caro sang, and, inspired by some sorrow which she could not analyze, she charmed the small group of hearers. Vera sat among the long grasses under a tree, listening intently, and watching Caro with such earnestness that the girl felt it, and was occasionally

ill at ease. But Stanislas praised and flattered Caro, corrected her here, pronounced her perfect there, and entered with such joy into the smallest details of the execution of an aria, that she was radiant with delight.

"When do you hope to make your *début* in Paris, Miss Caro?" he asked, when they were both thoroughly fatigued. "Because I think it would be safe to venture upon it this winter."

"My *début!*" said Caro, looking frightened. "I should have been less surprised if you had told me that I need a couple of years at the Conservatoire!"

"One does not need the Conservatoire when one has had such excellent private instruction as you have received. You will be ready for a very creditable first appearance in the spring, if not this winter. But do not aim too high. Don't expect to be engaged at the Paris Grand Opera after you have sung five notes before the public. Think of the dozens of silly little angels who persist every year in flying into the footlights of the great theatres in Paris and London and burning their wings. You must not be too ambitious in your *début*."

"You will give us the proper advice when the time comes, won't you?" said Mrs. Merlin.

"I shall be only too happy to help in introducing such a sweet singer to the world," said the musician, so gravely and politely that Mrs. Merlin was quite overcome, and cast a triumphant glance upon the group of listeners.

Mrs. Harrelston professed to have enjoyed the music very much, but the truth was that she had been carefully observing Mr. Pleasant Merrinott, and was not entirely pleased with the manner in which the young Indian kept his eyes fixed upon Alice. When she arose to go, Stanislas said —

"My dear madam, allow me to offer a suggestion. Hotels and hotel dinners are an invention of the arch

enemy, who is in league with all cooks of German origin, but especially with those in Swiss inns. Now would it not be pleasant to dine together in the open air, on the great terrace of the Casino, where we can see the mountains? If you will but issue the edict, I will order the dinner at seven, and ——"

Mrs. Harrelston could not plead her headache as an excuse, for it had vanished, and after having been assured that the proposed terrace was eminently a proper place, she consented. So the little party assembled at the pretty Casino as the sun was going down, and, seated in a corner, looked out, as they dined, over the rushing Aar and the high banks covered with quaint houses, and the many coloured ferns and flowers among the vines. As the coffee was served, Alice sprang up, her cheeks glowing with excitement, and pointed in the direction of the Alps without speaking a word.

"Is the girl mad?" said Mrs. Harrelston. "What do you see, daughter?"

"The *Alpglühen!*" cried Stanislas. "Ah! there is something that music cannot express. Look! Look!"

All looked in the direction of the great snow-clad line of the Alps, clearly and majestically defined against the evening sky, in which still lingered a few gleams of the departing sunset. The western horizon was lightly veiled, and broad shadows were already descending upon the valleys, and had covered with their veil the dark group of houses below the cathedral platform. The sun's rays no longer caressed the summits of the Jungfrau and the Blümlisalp, but in their stead a mysterious and exquisitely beautiful rose-tint was creeping up the snowy sides of each mountain, and increasing momentarily in intensity of splendour.

"The Jungfrau has a heart of fire beneath her cold, white bosom," cried the musician. "And see the others!

Now the Mönch has caught the glow — and now it overspreads the Eiger."

The mountains were transfigured. The wave of rose colour swept over the Blümlisalp, and then, quicker than thought, the whole range glowed as if fires raging within were striving to break through the icy barriers of the glaciers. Who that has seen the Alpglühen can forget it? It thrills the heart and inspires the soul; the lonely and majestic peaks, touched by the sacred fires of heaven, for a moment before the darkness comes, seem to draw one toward them, upward and out of the commonplace highways and vulgar plains of the grovelling world.

When the Alpglühen was over the shadows leaped audaciously to the very summit of the Casino terrace, and the sound of music came from a grove on a hill near by.

"A concert! fitting end for such an ideal day," said Stanislas. "Let us go and hear these rustics interpret Strauss and Schubert. What! no — yes — they have even ventured to attack Beethoven. Who will go?"

"Not I," said Vera. "I begin to feel a chill. And as Mrs. Harrelston has already complained of the night air, I will accompany her, if she will allow me, to the hotel."

"Yes, dear," said Mrs. Merlin, in a low voice to Alice's mother. "I will look after the girls and bring 'em home early."

So Mrs. Harrelston and Vera went away together.

* * * * * *

Mrs. Merlin was undoubtedly in earnest when she promised to "look after the girls," but the good soul was tired, and sat down on a bench as soon as she had been once around the concert garden with the young couples. The result was that Pleasant and Alice strayed in one direction, and Stanislas and Caro in another, and even had the old lady tried to discover them she would have found

it difficult, for the little grove was filled with couples promenading and laughing and talking in undertones, while the music went dreamily on.

"Well," said the Indian to Alice, as they came to the edge of a terrace higher than that of the Casino, and overlooking the pleasant valley and the roaring river, "to-morrow you will be on your way to Paris, and I shall be quite alone."

"Alone!" said the girl. "Oh no! You will have your Russian-Polish friends to comfort you."

"Friends!" exclaimed Pleasant impatiently. "What are they to me?"

"Oh, Mr. Merrinott! And after we found you on your knees before one of them this morning!" Alice laughed merrily.

"Ah! that must have looked right silly. But I was only picking up a handkerchief. I hope you do not think that I was adoring that young woman. She frightens me, but she could never fascinate. By the way, what has become of Colonel Cliff?"

"Poor man! No one has given him a thought to-day. Yet he is very gallant — and — and useful. He has gone flying off to Spain, in obedience to a telegram, to look at some mines in which he has chosen to interest himself, and we shall not see him again for a month. He will come back to Paris when he has finished his business. Look, Mr. Merrinott, the mountains — our dear old, snowy, delightful friends! There they are once more. They have come out from behind their veil to say good-bye."

The moon was rising, and the Alps were dimly visible — a faint white line — on the far-off horizon.

"I hate those words 'good-bye,'" said Pleasant.

"I suppose that is the reason that you gave me hardly time to say them when you rushed away on the Brunig the other day. Well, now we must say them again. Good-

bye, old friends," she said, stretching out one hand and pointing to the mountains. "Perhaps some day we shall see you once more. Perhaps I shall return to your beautiful valley of Meiringen."

She stood gazing intently at the snow-clad chain for some moments, then glanced up at the young Indian, but she looked down again immediately, and her heart beat loudly and fast.

Pleasant stood bareheaded beside her, with his lips parted, and such adoration in his eyes that she could not misinterpret his intention. She tried to speak and to move away, but it was too late.

"Miss Harrelston — Alice," he said, "I cannot let you go without telling you what my stay among those mountains has taught me. It has taught me that I love you — that I love you — hopelessly perhaps, but for ever — for ever." He leaned against the railing of the terrace; for now that he had said his say, his courage and his strength were ebbing away together.

Alice said nothing.

"Your silence frightens me, Miss Harrelston," he stammered. "If I have done wrong — if I have offended you — let us have the good-bye for ever now — here — at the gate of this enchanted land where I have been so happy." He held out his hand.

The Alpglühen! Beautiful as it had seemed when it illuminated the virginal front of the Jungfrau, it was dull and faint in Pleasant's eyes by comparison with the rose-ate glow which overspread Alice's cheeks and brow as he took her unresisting hand in his, and with a sudden sense of triumph drew her to his breast. No one was near the youthful pair; the promenaders were turned aside from the terrace by that happy hazard which so often protects the meetings of true lovers. Alice felt a burning kiss upon her forehead, and strangely mingled with the mur-

mur of the waters of the Aar, as it hurried past the ancient town, she seemed to hear the words —

"Forgive me, Alice, and love me! Forgive me, Alice — and give me your love, as I give you mine!"

When conscience-stricken Mrs. Merlin found them and begged them to help her "hunt up Caro and Stanislas," they were standing a little apart, and looking silently and steadfastly out upon the dimly-defined line of the Alps — those mighty guardians of the sweet vale of Meiringen, the vale where they had learned to love each other.

CHAPTER XVII.

CARO'S CONFESSION.

CARO and Stanislas were not found without difficulty. At last they were discovered, sitting on a bench under a tree, and seemingly engaged in a vehement discussion.

"You naughty girl!" said Mrs. Merlin, "to give me such a scare! I thought you'd fell off from the high wall and got all smashed to pieces. Stanislas, that child's jest ketchin' her death o' cold! Come! We must all go in!"

"You have but to command, and we obey," said the musician gallantly; but his brow was disfigured by an ugly scowl, and he made an impatient gesture, which might have been interpreted, by an acute observer, as signifying a desire to throw the old lady from the terrace wall of which she had spoken.

Caro's face was flushed, her lips were tightly compressed, and her blue eyes were wide open, with a startled look in them. She arose wearily, and, without making any reply to her mother's remarks that "she was in a gallopin' fever, and probably would be down sick as soon as she got back to Paris," she left the garden leaning on the musician's arm. The old lady cast a sharp look at Miss Harrelston, who lingered behind with Pleasant, evidently very much interested in what he was saying.

Suddenly he took her hand, and Mrs. Merlin observed that he held it rather longer than was customary; then he bowed gravely and left her. Alice came running to join the others.

"What's the matter with the Injun?" inquired Mrs. Merlin. "He popped off as if you had sent him to scalp one of your enemies."

"More of his eccentricity," said Alice, averting her pretty face so that the old lady should not see the rosy colour which invaded it. "He has an insane notion that he wishes to stay on the terrace until midnight, looking at the Alps. So I told him that he must do that alone, and he seemed the least bit offended at it. Then I explained that it would not be proper for me to remain longer, and bade him good night. I don't think he liked that, either."

"No; I'll be bound he'd ruther have had company," remarked the old lady. "And a mighty sight *he* would have cared whether it was proper or not! Proper's a word that don't trouble his sleep much!"

Stanislas was bidding Caro good-night in the garden of the hotel, when Vera appeared beside them as if she had sprung out of the ground. Caro gave a little scream, and looked rather indignantly at the fair intruder. The fact was that the musician had taken Caro's hand, and was bending over it to touch it with his lips when the Russian girl loomed up like a vindictive sprite. Caro withdrew her hand so quickly that Stanislas was vexed, and when he saw Vera his eyes flashed, and the sinister expression which so transfigured his face came over it.

"Continue your devotions, Brother Stanislas," said Vera; "you could not have a fairer goddess. I like to see that the old-fashioned gallantry still survives."

"It is the future *diva* that I am saluting," said Stanislas. "The great singer whose hand we shall all esteem it an honour to kiss."

"Of course," said Vera faintly. Caro fancied that a pained expression settled upon Vera's face. "I am glad that Mademoiselle has a fine career before her. I shall watch her progress with as much interest as you show, brother."

Caro fancied that there was a hidden meaning in these words. There was the ring of menace in Vera's tones. Caro looked in the Russian girl's face, determined to read the secret which she felt was lurking there, and which perhaps concerned her own happiness. But she shuddered and looked away again, out toward the broad expanse of green hills dimly seen in the white moonlight. For into Vera's eyes came a hard, cruel expression — that of a jealous enemy, determined to rid herself of the object of her resentment. Caro felt as if she were in Vera's power; that Vera could, with a turn of her hand, annihilate her when she was in that mood. Then the look vanished, as if Vera had recalled it into the depths of her soul, out of which it had come at her bidding, and she smiled so sweetly and chatted so pleasantly for five minutes that she almost dispelled the impression which she had made. Yet, when she had said "good-night," and gone away with Stanislas, Caro felt the meaning of the black looks rising in her heart as a cloud comes to darken the brightness of the sky. She stood quite still in the shade of a clump of rose-bushes in the garden, as amazed and frightened as she would have been had a serpent raised its head from the dust at her feet and hissed at her. But her mother's voice presently recalled her to her senses, and she went in, glancing now and then behind her, as if afraid of some unseen malignant influence.

Alice had stolen to her own room, which opened out of a parlour, on the other side of which was Mrs. Harrelston's bed-chamber. She would rather not have seen her mother that night; she was anxious to be alone — to think — to

question herself. It seemed to her as if the kiss which had fallen upon her brow must be visible there, like a diamond star in a diadem. She wished to see if she were not transfigured by the touch. But she heard her mother calling, and went to her, to receive a mild reproof for her conduct in staying out so late.

"By the way, my dear," said Mrs. Harrelston, who was reposing in an arm-chair, while Bertine carefully brushed out her long hair, "I meant to have spoken to you about — about Mr. Merrinott. Perhaps I ought to have spoken sooner. I am not quite sure whether I ought to invite him to call on us when he comes to Paris. Not that I have any reason for distrusting the young man, or disliking him, but I think I should like to ask your papa's advice before I ask him to call. I must tell you that I happened to mention in a letter to your father that the young Indian was at Meiringen, and from a sentence or two in his answer, which has just reached me, I don't think he liked it. In fact, I am sure that he did *not* like it. So, perhaps we will not ask him to call — but we will see. How hot and flushed your face is, daughter. You need rest, and you may rise as late as you please to-morrow. The porter has taken us a *coupé* in the afternoon train, and I think we shall have a comfortable ride from Pontarlier. Remember about Mr. Merrinott."

"Very well, mamma. Good night."

Alice went to her own room, reflecting that Pleasant Merrinott was the sort of person who would call without invitation, if he felt a desire to see her, and who would make short work of all obstacles in his way.

Bertine came to her presently, and found her young mistress much less exacting than usual. Her task was over quickly, and she went away convinced that Mademoiselle Alice was nervous and abstracted. Miss Harrelston was sleepless, and, arrayed in a long silk wrapper, she

sat down in a cosy chair near the toilette-table. Her luxuriant hair fell about her neck and shoulders, and, in the dim light furnished by the two tall regulation candles, which in Swiss hotels are supposed to do the duty of gas, she looked like an old picture of some fair saint musing in her cloister upon things divine. And what is there diviner in the mystery of existence than a maiden musing over the dream of love in her heart, over the inexplicable boldness, the sudden confession of affection into which she has been betrayed by overwhelming emotions of the very existence of which she has hitherto had no suspicion?

It was a warm night; the window of her room was open, and the faint odour of the plants and shrubs in the garden drifted in. A wandering beam of moonlight had strayed through the half-closed shutters, and seemed stealing timidly and reverently toward her, as if to kiss the hem of her garments. The sound of the river's rapid current was delicious in her ears, for mingled with it she still heard, "Forgive me, Alice, and give me your love, as I give you mine!" Was she to blame for having listened to this passionate entreaty, which now seemed to follow her everywhere — on the wings of the wind, in the murmur of the stream, and in the hundred other mysterious voices of this summer night among the Swiss mountains? No; she would not reproach herself. Yet she felt a vague dread that sorrow was in store for her; that this strange being who had now become so precious in her sight was doomed to woes and disappointment and bitterness which would rack her heart-strings as fiercely as his own. But nothing could have induced her to give up his love, in which she believed as in a religion, and which had become part and parcel of herself. She was happy; and even the shadowy prospect of possible future unhappiness could not destroy the charm which had fallen upon her. So she sat quite still, staring at the intruding moonbeam with eyes which

did not see it, and which saw only the form of the loved one.

She was aroused from her reverie by a faint rustling and a gentle tapping at a door which opened into the corridor. She had locked the door communicating with the drawing-room when Bertine retired, and her first thought was that her mother had arisen, had discovered that fact, and had stolen into the passage to see if her daughter had gone to bed. Presently came another timid knock. Alice sprang up, looking around her, and her heart beat violently. A glance at the tiny clock on the mantle-piece told her that it was almost one o'clock.

"Who is there?" she said, in a low voice.

"Are you asleep, Alice?" was the rather absurd question, which came through the keyhole in a whisper.

"Caro! What can she want at this hour?" And Alice opened the door to the girl, who hastened in as if she were pursued, and sank down on the nearest chair. Caro was quite pale, and there were traces of tears upon her face. She had donned an old wrapper decorated with ink-stains; her hair was in disorder, and in one hand she held a portfolio and a pen, which articles explained the spots. Her blue eyes were so full of pain that Alice's tender heart was touched.

"You frightened me, Caro," she said; "but you seem more alarmed and agitated than I am. Have you seen a ghost, dear, or have you been seized with inspiration and begun to write an opera?"

Caro sighed. "Mother's gone to bed and locked her door, and I've been writing, and got so nervous I thought I should fly. Mother gave me a scolding, too, before she went to her room. It wasn't necessary; I was miserable enough without it. Oh! Alice, I wish I were dead!"

Alice took the pen and portfolio from the girl's feverish hand and laid them on the toilette-table. Then she in-

stalled her in the arm-chair, and sat down on a stool at her feet.

"You are nervous and worried," she said kindly, "and you hardly know what you are saying. The idea of wishing yourself dead just as you are beginning to live!"

Caro looked doubtfully at her, with a strongly pronounced desire to burst into tears anew; but she restrained this, and said rather fiercely —

"No, I don't wish I were dead, but I do wish I were back in Illinoy! I wish I had never seen Europe, never heard of it. I wish it were buried under ten millions of Swiss glaciers!"

"Why, Caro," said Alice, to whom the world at that moment seemed a fair and goodly place, and the corner of Europe where she then was especially dear, "how can you be out of humour with Europe, when you are just on the threshold of success here?"

"No, no, Alice," said the girl ruefully, "you are mistaken; I shall fail — I feel that I shall fail. It has been a miserable dream, and now I wish with all my heart that I had never stirred from the spot where I was born."

The tears glistened in the great blue eyes, and Alice felt moved and sympathetic. Caro's Western frankness might have offended her delicate sensibility at another time, but now it seemed natural and somewhat reasonable. There was a growing suspicion in her mind that this despondent mood was due to something that Stanislas had said, or had not said, but she did not feel as if she ought to ask Caro if that were true.

"You will not fail, my dear, overworked, little singer," she said. "You *must* not fail. You would break all our hearts. Think how much pride we take in your progress, and in the thought of your coming success! But you

must not use your strength so lavishly. You have been writing an hour after you should have been in bed. Now was that wise?"

"I can't help it," said the girl. "That's my correspondence."

"Your correspondence? But your friends can wait — when you are weary."

"My friends! I write three letters a month to a Chicago newspaper, and one to a weekly in Wisconsin. And I can't write when mother is around, so I wait until she is in bed. I'm lucky to get the work, for if I hadn't got it we should have had to go home long ago. Neither mother nor I had any idea of the expense out here when we came, and so — but let's not talk about that. It makes my head ache to think of it. There's a two-column account of the Giessbach Fall in that portfolio, and six columns like that will buy me the dress which I must have when I go back to Paris, and will help to pay our rent. That's worth while. But I'm sick and tired of everything, and I know this last letter is gloomy enough for the obituary column."

"No," said Alice, determined to encourage her, "you will not fail. The very fact that you have the energy to write letters after midnight is a proof of that. I cannot understand your new mood, dear. Has Monsieur Stanislas been saying something discouraging?"

"Don't speak of Stanislas! I hate him!"

"Indeed!" Alice looked up into the girl's face with a quaint smile. Caro's lips trembled, and her eyes brimmed over. "You must allow me to doubt that. I should almost have thought the contrary."

Miss Merlin's face was a curious study. The girl tried hard to return Alice's inquiring look, but she could not. The tears were a torrent now, and Alice was surprised to feel Caro's arms thrown impetuously around her neck,

Caro's head upon her shoulder, and Caro's whole frame convulsed with sobs.

"What is it that has so grieved you, dear?" said Alice.

"Well, I don't care; I can't conceal it; I must have some one to talk to, or I shall die. I *do* love him; I worship him; I adore his genius, and I love him as I did not believe I could love anything on earth."

Alice was startled at the vehemence of Caro's emotions. But she said softly—

"Well, there is no sin in loving Stanislas. I am not worldly-wise, as you know. It may not be prudent to love such a wayward genius, but certainly there is no reason why it should make you so melancholy. Cheer up, Caro, and tell me everything."

Caro raised her head, and looked at Alice almost defiantly for an instant. "There is nothing more to tell," she said, "unless—unless I tell you that my love, which a month ago made me happy—made my whole life blessed—now causes my wretchedness. Oh, Alice, I believed in Stanislas; I thought him a demi-god. It never seemed to me that he could be a creature made of common clay like the rest of us. The very thought that he took an interest in me—in my welfare—seemed to inspire me. I don't believe you could understand what devotion I felt for that man. To have had his love would have seemed to me the best thing in the world. Oh, why did I ever see him? Why did I ever come to this miserable Europe, where everything that seems beautiful and sincere and noble has a lie hidden behind it?"

"Be calm, Caro. You will wake mamma. Remember that it is very late. Can you not tell me why you have lost faith in Stanislas?"

Caro did not directly answer the question. After a minute's silence, she said—

"Did you observe that woman in the garden when we came in to-night? You should have seen her when she went away with Stanislas!"

"His sister? Why? What new freak has that eccentric young person been guilty of?"

"The sister of Stanislas! Alice, she is no more his sister than I am — than you are!"

The two girls arose together, and stood looking at each other.

"Surely," said Alice, "you would not have me believe that Stanislas is not a gentleman."

"Oh, no! I don't know what I think! There is some strange mystery here, of which we have only seen one thread. I accuse nobody. I suspect everybody. I am wretched. I know that the woman is not the sister of Stanislas, but let us not talk of that! I will know who and what she is! But I feel a presentiment, Alice, that she is stronger than I am, and that she has thrown a shadow over my life. If I were superstitious I should believe that she possesses the evil eye! I tell you, Alice, I have lost my faith and my courage all at once, and I am miserable. I love Stanislas still, but I no longer believe in him; and that is torture. I am glad that we are going back to Paris, away from him, to-morrow."

"To-day, you mean," said Alice. "Look at the clock, and then run to bed. We will talk this over on the journey."

CHAPTER XVIII.

BETWEEN SORROW AND DOUBT.

PLEASANT felt as if he had fallen from the clouds. He was standing on the Pont du Mont Blanc at Geneva, gazing idly into the waters of the Rhone, as they rushed out of the lake and away, past the quaint, tall houses, down the valley toward the sun-swept lands of the south. The old town seemed asleep. Half an hour earlier a steamer, laden with excursionists, had noisily left the quay for Vevey; now it had vanished in the blue distance. Mont Blanc was hidden behind a white curtain. On the small island between the Pont des Bergues and the bridge where Pleasant stood, Jean Jacques Rousseau appeared to nod upon his pedestal, whence he has for so many years looked out on Lake Leman with grave, mournful air, as in life he looked at it. The brawny washer-women, leaning over the sides of the wash-houses securely moored in the impetuous stream, lazily drew the garments which they were cleaning through the cool water. They seemed at play rather than at work. The sun was hot, and the sailors from the small schooners which ply up and down the lake with loads of stone and lumber were coiled on the benches in the Public Garden, and were fast asleep. Down the Rue du Mont Blanc a solitary pedestrian was making his way, timidly, as if he felt qualms of conscience at being abroad at that particular time.

Pleasant looked up from the water. His head was beginning to turn, and he rested his eyes on the deep green of the trees on Rousseau's island, and then on the tender blue of the sky. The witchery of September in this delightful mountain region was at its height; air, water, earth were lovely, and at peace. Even the austere dome of the ancient church in which Calvin once preached was tipped with sunbeams. How did John Calvin bend to his rigorous and terrible discipline a people born beneath such Italian skies, beside such vine-clad hills and such enchanted streams? How mighty was the genius that could bring harsh, stern, terrible doctrine into such a smiling region, and plant it there, and make it grow and flourish! Pleasant had been reading about Calvin and his sojourn in Geneva, and he wondered how the Genevese could ever have allowed the sweet hill of Champel to be desecrated by the burning of Michael Servetus, who had dared to express mild doubts as to the dogma of the Trinity. But he forgot that in winter the aspect of nature at Geneva is harsh and forbidding enough to foster the most severe and melancholy thoughts, and that perhaps the fierce heart of Calvin, which had been nourished in its sternness by the winds, the snows, and the mists of December and January in the mountains, felt itself touched with charity and pity, and now and then with thrills of passion, when the enchantment of September was abroad in the land.

The young Indian did not think twice about the hill of Champel, and the flames which consumed the audacious Spaniard Servetus, for a far more engrossing image arose before his mental vision.

It was the figure of Alice as he had seen her while she stood watching the "Alp glow" from the Casino in Berne. He sighed mournfully, and began walking slowly to and fro.

It was ten days since he had told Alice of his love;

since that brief, tender, yet impassioned confession in the moon-lit garden. And he had not seen her again; he had allowed her to go away to Paris without saying good-bye; without returning to renew his vow of love, to which she had so unresistingly listened; without asking the privilege of being near her in Paris. How could he explain his action to her — to the gentlest, the best of women — to Alice who had treated him with such delicate and refined consideration, and who seemed anxious to believe him a hero? There was no explanation possible. His negligence was an affront to Alice; and now this child of Nature began to see that it is dangerous to yield to one's impulses when one is in the midst of civilization; that conduct, even in affairs of the heart, is a matter of calculation; and, in short, that he had been guilty of an almost, if not quite, irreparable blunder. He groaned aloud as he contemplated his own folly.

The truth was that Pleasant had no sooner yielded to the desire of his soul to tell Alice of his love than he felt anew that he had been false to his "mission." This gave him inexpressible pain, and, with his heart torn with contending emotions, he had left her, abruptly, after his declaration, and had wandered about the streets of Berne until dawn, battling with his pride. It was only when a prying watchman manifested an inclination to arrest him as a prowling vagabond that Pleasant made up his mind to return to the Hotel Bellevue, and go to bed. He arose, after two or three hours of feverish unrest, and went out again into the fields. He took with him a bundle of letters and papers which had arrived by the morning mail. Sitting down by the waters of the singing Aar, he unfolded one of the papers, a Western journal, with a curious presentiment in his mind that he should find something in it that would help him to decide upon his course with Alice.

He *did* find something, which caused him to spring to his feet with an angry exclamation at his lips, and his most savage frown on his brow. At that moment he put his love resolutely behind him.

"I was a fool!" he said; "I was false to myself — false to all my people — false to the course that I have marked out. I must never see Alice Harrelston again, nor must I ever think of loving her. Where is my pride of race? Where is my oath that I had taken? I am a fool!"

The paragraph which had provoked this series of outcries was a simple statement that a large number of the white invaders, whose daring and illegal attempts he had described to Alice with so much warmth, had finally succeeded in "squatting" upon lands in the Indian Territory; and that they had been enabled to do this by the connivance of certain white men, who, a few years previously, had married Indian wives in the Cherokee Nation, thus acquiring a dubious species of citizenship, which they had now basely misused.

"The traitors!" cried Pleasant. "This is what comes of mixed marriages. A few more of them, and we shall no longer be in existence!" An angry flush deepened the bronze on his face as he thought of the commingling of blood in his own veins. "Let it stop here and now!" he said, in a voice broken with passion. "We must bend back our blood to the ancient strain! I will not set the example of another departure from the purity of the race! The dream is over. I must think of Alice no more. She will forget me; she will think that my words spoken in the garden were the ravings of a silly young savage, whose head was turned by the moonlight."

The result of that paragraph in the Western paper was that Alice went back to Paris without seeing her lover again. Until an hour before the train left Berne she

refused to believe that he would not come to her. She longed, yet dreaded to meet him once more; and it was not until she reached her home the next day, and was alone in her little white room in her father's house, that she realized the incomprehensible rudeness of the Indian's conduct. She had taken good care to let Caro and the two mothers know nothing about it; but it made a deep wound in her heart. For she loved him; she loved his very faults.

Mrs. Harrelston was glad that Pleasant had not appeared on the day of their departure, and she did not mention his name to her daughter during the journey.

And now Pleasant, on the bridge at Geneva, was sighing over his own acts. For although he was stoutly resolved not to yield to his love, he felt that it was ripening in his heart, and that he could not cast it out. A dozen times he had been on the point of writing to Alice, and as many times he had drawn back, frightened, before the seemingly impossible task of repairing his rudeness. He was curious to know what Alice thought of him; whether she were really offended and had banished him from her life as a profitless intruder, and whether she would respect him for the scruples which made him desperately faithful to his race. Alone in the midst of unsympathetic strangers, who stared and scowled at him as if they suspected him of designs upon their property, and uncertain what to do, Pleasant was wretched. He had faltered by the way, now. His days were passed in idleness and his nights in wakeful, bitter musings on his own irresolution. He had not even bade the disciples of Bakounin good-bye on leaving Berne, but had left a note for them saying that he might possibly return.

While he was in his brown study, and was pacing up and down so nervously that one or two loungers on the quay fancied him contemplating suicide, and were medi-

tating how they could save him if he should suddenly spring over the railings into the rapid stream, he felt a gentle touch upon his shoulder, and looked up hurriedly. He was not especially pleased to find Mademoiselle Vera standing near him, with her blue eyes filled with the light of a very graceful smile, and one well-gloved hand outstretched in token of greeting.

"How do you do?" she said, with that slight accent upon the *how* which always marks the foreigner struggling with the rather awkward English phrase. "Have you been holding a consultation on the present condition of society with Jean Jacques? He seems to have been saying something very dreadful, for you are as solemn as — what do the English say? — as solemn as a church. And how came you in Geneva?"

"I might ask you the same question, Mademoiselle, with the same surprise," said Pleasant, shaking hands and brightening a little, for conversation with a fellow creature was likely to afford momentary relief from his sorrow. "And your brother, is he with you?"

"Stanislas has gone to London. The cottage is deserted, the servants have departed, and I have come to Geneva to pursue my studies."

"Under Professor Bakounin?" said Pleasant.

"The water may hear you. The bridge might report your remarks. Be careful, if you please," said Vera. "But your indiscretion shall be answered, for are you not bound to us, are you not one of us, henceforth?"

Pleasant looked up quickly at Vera. He did not like this cool manner of assuming possession of him as if he were a person of no strength of character.

"Excuse me," he said. "I reckon there is a slight misunderstanding. I am not one of yours — in the sense in which you mean it."

"Well, perhaps not exactly," said Vera, with a nervous

laugh, and glancing quickly all around her. "But you are on the same road; we are fellow travellers. How odd that we should meet near the statue of Rousseau!"

"Quite appropriate, is it not? He was an enemy of society, and we ——"

Pleasant stopped short. He felt as if a great struggle were going on in his mind, and as if he could not at that moment say, as he would have said frankly enough not long before, that he was modern society's enemy.

"We are its enemies also," said Vera, finishing his sentence. "Ah! but Jean Jacques Rousseau was the most useless and impracticable of beings. He spent his life in endeavouring to form a new society in accordance with an imaginary compact, and wasted his hours in proclaiming absolute equality; but he suggested no means of getting rid of the old society. It is not difficult to be a foe in theory, as he was. Bah! he was only a dreamer! Yet perhaps I do him injustice," she added, approaching the bridge's railing, and looking over at the statue of the philosopher as if she were mentally taking his measure, and correcting some of her hasty impressions concerning him. "He was a pioneer, and that is a great deal. It was no small thing to hint that society was so bad that something ought to be substituted for it. If Jean Jacques had not lived, Bakounin might never have appeared. Mr. Merrinott, you are making me forget my prudence."

"I, Mademoiselle Vera, —" stammered the Indian.

"You are tempting me to talk on a subject which ought to be forgotten for the moment. I am afraid that I have been watched for the last few days, and I came here in the hope of averting suspicion. Do you understand me?"

"Perfectly. Why talk Bakounin? There are plenty of interesting topics suggested by this lovely scene. Now, Geneva itself is what I call a right beautiful place. And

there's Mont Blanc — only you never can see him when you wish." The youth made an effort to be cheerful, but a sigh came to his lips; yet he repeated with a semblance of merriment, "Why talk Bakounin?"

"Ah! why, indeed?" said Vera passionately, clenching the railing with both her small hands. "Because the world is wrong and must be righted; because one is reminded of it at every turn, and suffers in consequence of it at each instant. There are moments when I would gladly get away from the struggle. Do not fancy that I have not moments when I would prefer to be a shepherdess — even such a one as we see in Watteau's pictures — rather than a disciple of Bakounin, and — an executioner!" She raised her right hand and let it fall heavily on the railing, as if she were thinking of a headsman aiming a blow with his axe. "But I am glad to say that such longings are only temporary," she said, looking at Pleasant with a smile, which made her intense face almost beautiful. "Shall we walk a little, or do you prefer to remain here, pacing back and forth? I assure you that you look much more like a conspirator than I do. And when do you go to Paris?"

"I — I don't know. Perhaps not at all."

"Oh! you are bound to go to Paris, for, you remember, you are the subject of a wager, and your probation will not properly begin until you have arrived there."

They walked on together across the Pont du Mont Blanc, and into the Jardin du Lac. When they had found a shady place and were seated, looking out upon the placid water, dotted in the distance with white sails, Vera said abruptly —

"Have you had bad news from your Indians, Mr. Merrinott? Your face is full of sadness. And why did you leave Berne without saying adieu to any one? Do you know that I think Ignatius is sharpening his knife for

you? He seemed to fancy that your sudden departure was suspicious."

"Ignatius! Oh! the old Jew! Has he finished the clock of destiny?"

Vera did not answer.

"Forgive me," said Pleasant. "I will be prudent. We will ignore those matters, if we can, and then there will be no danger."

"There is always danger," said the girl. "But I do not fear for myself, as you know. It is for the cause. I hope that failure may not come just yet — not just yet. And as for your question about Ignatius — yes; the clock of destiny is quite finished."

She uttered these last words in a whisper which made Pleasant shudder. He began to regret that he had ever known this mysterious young woman. To-day she stirred up a rebellion in his blood. He did not like this atmosphere of plots, counterplots, and this network of spies and secret agencies. He was dissatisfied with society, unmistakably discontented and dangerously aroused by the injustice of which he and his were victims; but the more he saw of the working of Bakounin's plan the more distasteful and dreadful did it seem to him.

"Our friends, the young ladies especially, were sorry that you did not come to see them off — the next day, you remember. I think they were a bit surprised."

"Oh! they have quite forgotten me by this time," said Pleasant, endeavouring to appear unconcerned; but his face would not obey his will. And Vera looked straight at him, as she said —

"I thought Miss Harrelston remarked your absence. Indeed, she looked as if she fancied Stanislas and I were in some way accountable for it."

Pleasant's scowl relaxed. He was glad to hear that Alice appeared, at least, to regret that he had not seen her

again. "Miss Harrelston is interested in my work, not in me, Mademoiselle Vera," he said, vainly endeavouring to dissemble.

"Do you think so?" The tone in which Vera said this indicated plainly to Pleasant that he could not mislead Vera. "How smooth the lake is this afternoon! Who would believe, seeing it in a wild storm, as I saw it once, when the great masses of water crushed small boats as if they were egg-shells, that it could ever be so tranquil as this?"

"Is it not somewhat like the society, Mademoiselle Vera, which you propose to destroy? Will not society settle back into its accustomed placidity, after you have startled it to its greatest depths with your explosion?"

Vera's eyes flashed. "You do not believe in us," she said. "And yet — you can — you must. You will see that what you desire — as what we desire — can be attained only as we propose to attain it."

"I don't know," said Pleasant humbly, "what I do think. I thought that my mind was made up, and now I find it a sort of chaos. But I will say, in a general way, that if I were commanding a great army on a march, and I found that this lake lay in my path, and that I had not time to go round it, it would be more sensible for me to devise some plan of floating across upon its surface than to spend time and energy in devising means for blowing up its basin, in the hopes of producing a cataclysm which would change the face of nature."

The Russian girl smiled contemptuously. "I am afraid," she said, "that Rousseau has turned your head."

"No," said the Indian. "But, for the moment, I confess that I feel more inclined to try the experiment of floating with Rousseau than to run the risk of being submerged with Bakounin."

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE EXILE-WORLD.

PLEASANT and Vera talked until the sun went down and cool shadows began to creep along the shores of the lake. The Russian girl quite forgot her own injunctions about caution, and gossiped freely of her plans. Pleasant was more distressed than flattered by this proof of Vera's confidence in him. He could not refrain from admiring her, but he dreaded her. When she arose and bade him good-night, he felt as great a sense of relief as if a burden had been lifted from his shoulders. Yet he offered to escort her to her lodgings.

"No, thank you," she said, with a smile; "I repeat that you look more like a conspirator than I do; and you would not like to compromise me, I am sure. I am very comfortably installed in a modest pension, where I am about to study diligently, for a short time, and then I shall go to Paris."

The young Indian hoped that she would not hesitate to call upon him, if he could be of any service to her. She had turned to go, but she whirled around suddenly, poised airily on one foot, and looked him saucily in the face. It was the first time that he had ever seen her attempt anything like coquetry. When the sinister look went away, even for an instant, there was no doubt that she was attractive. He felt the fascination of her presence.

"You mean what you say, Mr. Merrinott," she said, slowly. "I can see that in your eyes. But if your offer of service were accepted — if your friendliness were put to the test — you would be obliged to draw back from it. For what can it mean to serve such a person as I am? Do you think you realize all that it means? You know that my life is concentrated on one object — that all my efforts tend in one direction. You think you are prepared to help me. Think twice, Mr. Merrinott, think twice."

And she was gone before he could say anything. Now he was more profoundly troubled than ever. This girl arose in his path whichever way he turned, and seemed to claim him for her service. He already felt a strange sense of servility. He disliked her conspiracy, and yet it was hourly assuming increased importance in his thought.

"I was not made for Europe," he muttered to himself, as he wandered along the dusty road toward France, gazing at the vineyards and the pretty gardens. "I am as stupid and silly here as a city man would be in the woods on the Grand River banks. I reckon I ought to have stayed at home. What have I accomplished since I came? Nothing. And I am turned round and round by every wind that blows. Each new person that I meet seems to work some change in my mind. No — no — this will not do. I must shut my heart up against everything except my poor Cherokees."

A vision arose before him of a green valley near Tahlequah, and a humble yet comfortable farm-house nestling in a corner of the vale. Corn-fields spread away to right and left, and the long and aromatic sheaves rustled musically in the breeze. Before the door of the house stood a horse, gaily caparisoned, and prancing with impatience. A tall and graceful youth, with a rifle in one hand and a light whip in the other, was approaching the horse, and a little negro, bearing a belt filled with car-

tridges, ran after him. It was morning, and the old man, Arch Sixkiller, was driving a herd of cows afield. A gaunt woman, with coal-black hair and eyes, stood near the horse, throwing crumbs to a timorous flock of newly-fledged chickens. Seated in the shade of the wall of a log granary two stalwart men were skinning a deer which had been killed the night before. It was the vision of his home in the Nation that Pleasant saw, and he groaned aloud as he thought that the hated white man might, in a few short months, invade the peaceful valley, parcel out the lands which the Indians now held in common, and begin anew the old crowding process which had proved so deadly to the Indians.

"Can nothing stop them?" he said aloud, for he was utterly absorbed in the contemplation of the injustice done his race. "The years go round and bring only new encroachments, new exactions. Society will do nothing for us; it spurns us, laughs at us, derides us in cheap paragraphs in its silly newspapers! God of Justice! is there no way to bring this hard-hearted society to its senses; no way to take it by the throat and say, 'Before you go another step you shall render us *Justice!* We will *not* lie down and be crushed; nor will we be pushed into the Pacific Ocean!' Is there no way, no sudden shock, no sharp and certain means of getting attention?"

He bit his lips, and, pausing in his walk, leaned against a stone wall, and looked out over the gleaming surface of the lake. He had thought that he was getting away from Bakounin's theory; but now he found that he was coming slowly back to it. Was Vera's plan, horrible as it was, the right one after all? Had the sombre and saturnine Bakounin hit upon the truth? Must man trust to himself rather than to God? Must he take vengeance into his own hands? *Could* he do it? Was it within the scope of possibility? Pleasant thought not; yet he was

compelled to avow that whenever he meditated on the means of redressing the injustices which had been practised upon his race for many generations, he could see no other than violent means as clearly practicable. And how — even were it, under the exceptional circumstances, allowable — could the theory of Bakounin be applied in a free country like America?

He slept none that night. The demon of doubt was with him and was all-powerful. The gentle vision of Alice was vanished, and it was not love, but hate, that reigned in Pleasant's heart.

O happy nations, moving resistlessly forward in the paths which you fancy chosen for you by the Supreme Power, and crushing now and then feebler peoples that stand in your way, well is it for your peace that you do not realize the hatred and burning desire for vengeance that your insolent progress arouses in the minds of the oppressed and vanquished! Well is it for your tranquillity that you do not know of the justice that shall one day bid you render account of the blood of the innocents whom you have slain, of the wars that you have provoked, and of the hopes that you have ruined! Justice is omnipotent, and will prevail; let great and ambitious nations remember this, and tremble when they are about to do wrong!

The result of Pleasant's relapse into doubt was a determination to see more of Vera, and to prolong his stay in Geneva. His spirit was so shaken that he could do no work. He neglected his correspondence with the agents of his people in Washington, and sat in his room, irresolute and desperately unhappy.

In the afternoon a little girl brought him a note from Vera. He turned the daintily scented document over twice before he consented to open it. Had she written to accept his offer of service? Was it his fate that he should become part and parcel of a Nihilist conspiracy —

that he should wear the collar of Bakounin? The girl inquired if there were any answer, so Pleasant tore open the envelope, and read —

"Mademoiselle Vera presents her compliments to Monsieur Merrinott, and begs to inform him that she has obtained for him an invitation for this evening to a 'reunion' in the exile world, which she thinks may prove vastly entertaining. Most of those present will be exiled Communists — impracticable people whom may Heaven forgive — but there will be a few Russians. Pray come, and have no fear that anything very extraordinary will be said or done openly, as the agents of the present Governments in Paris and St. Petersburg will be among the guests. *Allons!* my friend, amuse yourself for an idle hour by contemplating the European revolution in epitome. May I expect you?"

The address of an obscure street in the old quarter of Geneva was written faintly in pencil below, and the young Indian concluded that it indicated the place of meeting.

The small girl carried back an affirmative answer, and at the appointed hour that evening Pleasant found himself in a large, old-fashioned hall, over a *café*, in a small dark street at some distance from the rushing river. At the end of the hall opposite the entrance was a platform, and a desk draped with a blood-red flag. A piano stood in a corner. The windows of the room were open, as the evening was very warm, and there was no appearance of secrecy or alarm. The Cherokee was scowled at by two or three young gentlemen with bushy black hair and exceedingly white faces, who appeared to consider him an interloper, but he returned the scowls with so much interest that they were visibly disconcerted. Presently Vera arrived, with two other young ladies, both of whom were very pretty. They wore their hair cut short, and brushed back in masculine fashion from their foreheads,

"Why, Monsieur, they do not even know that the great Hegel wrote the 'Algebra of Revolution.'"

As Pleasant had also been densely ignorant of this fact until that particular instant, he did not feel inclined to blame the Communists with much severity. The Russian appeared to care but little what Pleasant's opinions were. But he was anxious to air his own. As he was beginning an impatient tirade in an undertone, Vera interrupted him to say sharply—

"You are such a cynic that I am afraid you will give Mr. Merrinott a very poor idea of our cause. Long waiting has somewhat soured your temper. I fear you find nothing to your taste."

Pleasant looked inquiringly from one Russian to the other.

"I shall not attempt to conceal from our friend," said the cynic, "that the revolutionists in Geneva do not agree among themselves, and that I often despair of seeing any good come out of their efforts, because they are so divided. We must all get back to Hegel, sir, back to Hegel; there is no safety elsewhere."

"You must tell me about Hegel," stammered Pleasant, who was more in the dark than ever.

"Yes, the Socialists are too much divided," continued the Russian, evidently against Vera's wish. "I have had an excellent chance to study them, for I have now been some years in exile. I have discovered that the English Socialist is practical, utilitarian to a degree; he is looking for diminution of the number of hours of labour and an increase of wages, and that is about all. The French Socialists — pah! We have seen those peacocks at work in the Commune time;" and he waved his hand scornfully in the direction of the group of French exiles. "Their idea is to be puffed up with importance; to wear uniforms covered with gold and silver lace; to give orders, dis-

tribute patronage, drink champagne to the health of '*le peuple*,' and to caper around in pools of blood; that is what they understand by revolution. Then the Germans — we have a few of them, and that few is too many — among us. The moment that they try to practise revolutionary Socialism they give themselves heavy and pedantic airs; they pop into spectacles and write voluminous treatises; they are logicians, although they are not logical; they are infatuated with the absolute idea of Hegel, but they do not begin to comprehend it. As for the Slav — the Russian — as for ourselves ——"

"Ah!" said Vera, her eyes flashing and the old sinister look settling over her face, "I know what you are going to tell Mr. Merrinott about us. I have heard you say it often enough. You intend to tell him, that, in the Russian mind, the 'Idea' of Hegel develops a monstrous Utopia. I am sure I don't know why you call it Utopia."

"That is when my despair takes possession of me, Sister Vera," said the Russian, beginning to cringe before the enthusiastic girl.

"It is no Utopia," continued Vera, in a fierce whisper, which impressed Pleasant more powerfully than the most resonant shouting could have done. "I grant you that the Slav, when he welcomes Socialistic doctrines, is plunged into a dream in which he sees a mighty vision of the universal overturning; of creation cracking and falling to pieces; of flames penetrating the heart of worm-eaten civilization, and reducing it to ashes; that he takes delight in the thought of chaos and extermination; for he knows that beyond them is the golden age, and that the regeneration cannot come until after the cataclysm for which he earnestly hopes. But I would not insult him by telling him that he is a Utopian."

"Ah, well, we must get back to Hegel — back to Hegel," said the Russian, looking rather condescendingly

at Vera, whose cheeks were flushed, and whose eyes sparkled like diamonds. "Our younger brethren consider it proper to decry Hegel, and to say that he is old-fashioned, forgetting that the whole system for social renovation was drawn from his philosophy——"

"I should like to understand this better," said Pleasant eagerly.

"Forgetting that he is the father of the 'Idea.' Our young collegians and the silly youthful workmen who get locked up for conspiracy in Russia have been stuffing their heads with natural science, whereas they should have been feeding upon the Hegelian philosophy."

"Let us sit down. The exercises are about to begin," said Vera.

From a corner Pleasant heard a smooth-faced orator talk very glibly in French for twenty minutes, at the end of which time a pale young lady seated herself at the piano and struck up the *Marseillaise*, which many of the company joined with the hatless boot and shoe dealer in singing. The music revived the youth; he was beginning to languish in the overheated atmosphere of the Hegelian philosophy. There was a rough menace, a strong contempt for authority, in this *Marseillaise*, which was gratifying. After the singing, a woman, poorly clad and physically weak, arose, and leaning against the small table covered with the blood-red flag, poured forth a passionate invective aimed at the moderate Republicans in power in France, and made ample threats of vengeance when the good time should come.

"They will give us amnesty, brethren," she cried, "but we must not allow it to weaken our energies — we must not sink into slothfulness. Let us not forget the dead who are to be avenged."

She then read a fiery poem — not devoid of talent — upon the "Religion of Humanity." Certain sentiments

expressed in her verse provoked a discussion between the French and German Socialists. The Gaul talked in his language; the Teuton in his; satire flew, irony fell in showers; repartee sparkled; the partisans of each faction applauded; and the women looked on rapturously, their hands folded, their mouths open, and comprehending but little. An hour passed thus, and Pleasant found the heat and the jargon quite intolerable.

"I think you must excuse me," he whispered to his companions. "My head is turning round."

"We will accompany you to the balcony," said Vera, beckoning to the young ladies seated near her.

They went out by a side door to a rustic porch overlooking a court-yard, and sat down on a bench.

"I reckon they are not accomplishing anything very practical in there this evening," remarked the Indian.

"Pooh! they are children!" said Vera's friend. "Why, Monsieur, as I have already told you, they laugh at the great Hegel."

Pleasant was silent for some minutes, and the Nihilists did not seem inclined for conversation. At last, however, Vera said —

"I know what you are musing over, Mr. Merrinott. You are wondering how the philosophy of Hegel can be of use to your oppressed and threatened Indian brethren. Is it not so?"

"I am not thinking at all. My mind is as blank as a piece of white paper freshly made. I have lost all my old beliefs, if I ever had any, and none have yet come to replace them," answered Pleasant mournfully.

"Then there never was a better moment in which to tell you more about Bakounin," said the girl joyously.

Pleasant listened; and as he listened he felt his old repugnance to the name of the destroyer and to his mystical doctrine entirely vanishing.

CHAPTER XX.

THE APOSTLE OF MAN'S WILL.

THE spectacled cynic began a brilliant strain of narration, but a new idea seemed suddenly to occur to him. His eyes twinkled behind his glasses, and he arose, saying—

"My children, the night is very fine, and the atmosphere in this court-yard is unpleasant. As we are to have a long and important interview—I foresee it—let us go out into the fields."

The young ladies seconded this proposition, and half an hour afterwards the party found itself on the brow of a broad hill on the shore of the lake opposite Geneva, whither a wheezy horse, attached to a rickety public carriage, had drawn them. Vera and her companions had chatted gaily in Russian, English, and French alternately to beguile the way. As for Pleasant, he would have gone with them to the Siberian wilderness had they asked him to do so. He no longer had a will of his own; he followed them blindly, regardless of consequences.

The cynic led the way into the garden of a small inn on the hill-top, and there Vera and the girls seated themselves at a cosy table. The Russian bade Pleasant imitate their example, and calling the servant, ordered some flasks of wine. Then he took from his pocket a huge leathern case which exhaled a strange Oriental aroma, and opening

it, showered down a score or two of cigarettes upon the table. The Nihilist girls each took one, and lighting the fragrant rolls at the lamp which the servant brought, began gracefully and dreamily smoking, and watching the perfumed smoke as it drifted upward in little clouds. Pleasant wondered if they were contemplating in these smoke wreaths the apocalyptic vision of the crumbling back of society into the chaotic ruins of which he had lately heard so much.

"Here is wine for those who wish it," said the cynic, pouring himself a generous draught, and pushing the bottle and glasses toward his companions. Then he sat down, and began to talk in a monotonous, sing-song tone.

And while Pleasant listened he looked out over the vine-laden terraces, and at the broad leaves on which the moonbeams made merry, and at the tranquil silvered expanse of the lake far below. He was conscious that Vera narrowly observed him.

"I will venture to say," remarked the cynic, bringing his hand heavily down on the table and making the glasses jingle, "that these young ladies — Miss Vera of course excepted — know as little, Monsieur, of Hegel and his relations to Bakounin as you do. And they need more blame than they get for this negligence. For how" — he looked uneasily around him — "can they conspire unless they know exactly to what end they are conspiring. There are too many blind workers in our ranks."

Vera gave her assent heartily to this, and the short-haired, blue-eyed young women looked a trifle confused.

"We have said a good bit about Hegel this evening. It happens to have been Hegel who gave the main impulse to the mind of Michael Bakounin. And who was this Bakounin? He was a gentleman, as nearly all the chiefs of Russian radicalism have been. He was born in 1814, and received a capital education from native and French professors. Then he was placed in the Artillery

School in St. Petersburg, and, oddly enough, his short stay there developed the germ already planted in his spirit and destined to burst forth into full flower under Hegelian influence. Alexander the First of Russia had given many dazzling promises of liberal reform in the early part of his reign, but these were not fulfilled in the Emperor's closing years, and shortly after his death came the famous revolt of certain regiments of the guard against the Absolutist Government.

"It is not necessary to dwell on the manner in which that revolt was put down. It was stamped out with all the implacable rigour which has become historical; and as a violent reaction against Liberalism had set in throughout the Empire, the military schools, out of which the revolt had come, were placed under an especially unbending discipline. The youths in the schools were constrained to absolute outward respect of the forms against which the whole liberal part of the nation had once hoped to rebel, but in their hearts they cherished secret contempt for the established order of things; their mental negation of existing institutions was complete. They adored the insurrectionists of December in secret; and when Michael Bakounin was in the Artillery School he heard constantly whispered on every side the names and the poetic and legendary history of those who had swung upon the gallows, or been exiled to the snows of the North, because they had revolted for liberty.

"The severe repression of all the generous and ardent ideas of these young minds seems to have filled Bakounin with a mortal sorrow. He lost all interest in the brilliant career before him, and at the time when he might have entered the Artillery of the Guard of the capital, and become a person of rank and consequence, he was so listless and inactive that he was sent away to pass the best years of his youth in an obscure garrison town in a corner

of the Empire. There he spent his days in dreaming of the future, and the army authorities were so displeased with him that they asked him to resign if he could not reform. Bakounin smiled, resigned, and went to live in Moscow. He was then two-and-twenty years old. Do the young ladies follow me? I speak the English, because of our young American friend."

"Perfectly," said the young ladies in chorus, twirling their cigarettes.

"It was in Moscow, where society — and the police for that matter — were reasonably tolerant under the reign of Nicholas, that Bakounin began to be familiar with Hegel's philosophy. Hegel was the rage in those days — toward 1836 — in Moscow. There was a rich man named Stankewics who had learned the German philosophy by heart, and taught it to his friends. The disciples were very zealous; they worked upon Hegel night and day; they discussed paragraph after paragraph of his treatises for hours, for weeks. The copies of the works passed from hand to hand until they were almost worn out, quite covered with notes, illegible. It was not at all uncommon to see intimate friends no longer on speaking terms because they could not agree upon the *essence of the absolute spirit*."

Pleasant smiled. But he felt that Vera's eyes were fixed reproachfully upon him.

"Michael Bakounin was soon recognized as the master-spirit of this Hegelian circle at Moscow. Stankewics bowed before him, and gave high praise to his speculative faculties; and in course of time Bakounin's reputation was so great that it spread beyond Russian boundaries. He left Moscow and went to Berlin in search of more light.

"Europe has forgotten what a tremendous enthusiasm there was over Hegel's monotonous and enigmatical style

ten years after the author's death. The enemies of our philosophy say that one of the sources of Hegel's popularity was that every one could find in the vagueness and obscurity of his writings whatever he or she pleased. But this was untrue. If Hegel is as difficult to decipher as a cuneiform inscription, it is also certain that his text has but one meaning, no matter how many imaginative and presumptuous people may have given it. Bakounin and the revolutionary school of the period found the right and only meaning. They deciphered the 'Algebra of Revolution.' Out of the dry phrases, the seemingly meaningless sentences which the sublime old man had left behind him, they got the promise of a future, glorious and imposing, but of necessity lying beyond the destruction of the actual order of things. I tell you, Monsieur, I tell you ladies," cried the Russian, waxing enthusiastic, and smiting the table, "when at last they had mastered Hegel, and they looked up from his books, they saw a grandiose vision of a blackened and empty heaven — the traditions of the Christian era in shapeless ruins, Deity dethroned, and, seated upon the throne of the universe, that noble and triumphant young queen — the *Absolute Idea!* Long had she slept in the bosom of Nature, like the beauty in the forest in the fairy tale, but now she had awakened in perfection and splendour, and wooed to her, as her spouse, *man*, henceforth to be king, henceforth to be the only living and legitimate Deity — the *divine biped*, always growing more and more divine, less and less human! These passionate students of Hegel believed that everything else had failed except man's will, and that, when *that* was exercised, regeneration would come. They denied all else; and when they reduced their belief to a formula they found that instead of 'Let *God's* will be done!' they were henceforth to say, 'Let *man's* will be done!'"

Pleasant bowed his head and said nothing. The girls

smoked on, and the miniature clouds of perfumed smoke drifted up like incense burned before an altar erected to the profane and audacious Bakounin.

"Doubtless there was a certain amount of intoxication in this new belief that man's will was infinite, that man was no longer the creature of the circumstances in which he had been placed, but that he could remould, refashion, rebuild the world — the universe. 'First!' said Michael Bakounin, 'let us sweep away the old rubbish; let us upset the ancient world utterly; let us precipitate society into chaos and bring it out anew; let us form a terrestrial paradise in which there shall be no sin and from which there shall be no fall; let us build a world in which every one shall have a place in the sunshine, bread to eat, and wine to drink!' He instilled into his disciples the theory that they must joy in destruction because it was the necessary prelude to the joy of rebuilding. And although the Nihilists of this generation have moved away from Hegelianism, they are still guided by that theory of Bakounin.

"There are some of them in Russia who profess to follow the master's banner, but who have written the word *Constitution* upon it. They do no harm; they are all labouring for the primary period of destruction which must come. The mass of Bakounin's disciples are resolved to deny everything that exists in the order of traditional ideas, to annihilate the present social fabric, and on the ruins to found the hope of a better world — *a new world!* Do not fancy that Russian Nihilism is a mere aspiration toward annihilation, for the sake of entering upon oblivion. We are not so East Indian as that. No! We hope that man will remain erect and mighty upon the ruins, and will know how to found an honest, a sensible, a just society. The safety of individuals and nations can be accomplished only by a simple and rapid method of cleansing that cave of iniquity called 'society' to-day. If we

are more radical than contemporary socialists of other countries, it is because our aim is grander and our determination more complete."

The speaker had finished his first flask of red wine. He rolled the bottle carelessly under the table, opened a fresh flask, absorbed a mighty draught, blinked at Pleasant, smiled complacently on the ladies, and resumed his sing-song address. He had been used, during his residence in London, to lecture to working-men's assemblies, and had acquired a precise and explicit habit of delivery which served the purpose well on this occasion.

"Michael Bakounin did not content himself with dreaming and theorizing. Hegel had told him of the *right of force*, and he was not long in marrying his philosophy to a militant policy. He went up to Paris in 1843, when the socialistic effervescence was beginning. He had conceived a vast plan of shattering social edifice after social edifice. He was like a man placing charge after charge of dynamite beneath crag after crag, in the hope of reducing a whole line of cliffs to shapeless ruin. He laboured to undermine monarchy in Russia; he tried to raise the standard of revolt in Bohemia; and in Dresden, in 1849, he was putting his principles into practice by urging, during the insurrection, the burning of the public buildings and the blowing up of the houses of certain dignitaries. The riots were suppressed; he was arrested and condemned to death; his sentence was commuted to imprisonment for life. He was at last handed over to the Russian authorities, and sent to Siberia. He escaped, after ten years of almost incredible sufferings there. He managed to get to London, and it was there that I first saw and knew him. I suppose you have read his history since that time?"

Pleasant confessed that he had not.

"Indeed! It is a part of the history of the time,

which will not be forgotten until the new order of things has rendered a history of the old order useless. Michael Bakounin was in all revolutionary movements in England, in the Congresses in Switzerland and Holland, everywhere preaching to men that as everything is rotten, everything, — State, Church, Exchange, banks, police, courts, Academies, Universities — must be blotted out. He urged men to deliver themselves from the fear of the Deity, and from their infantile respect for the fiction called law. 'Let your own happiness be your supreme law,' he said. He founded the secret society, of which I am sure, Monsieur, that you have heard."

Pleasant nodded. He was thinking of old Ignatius and the "clock of destiny."

"A society, the members of which are solemnly bound to possess no other country than that of the universal revolution, and to consider as reactionary every movement which has not for its unique and direct end the triumph of their principles."

Vera's face was pale, and the stern look of which Pleasant was almost afraid was upon it. The young Indian remembered that he had seen the same intense expression upon the faces of mulatto women possessed by hysterical religious excitement at meetings in the Southern town where he was educated.

"And how did Bakounin die, and where?" asked Pleasant.

"He died here in Switzerland, but a few years ago. Some say that he died of a broken heart, but I do not think so. He went on planning and fighting to the last, always adhering rigidly to his doctrines. The instruments which he tried to use for the inauguration of his great revolution were all too feeble. Extreme as society considers most of the French and Italian and German socialism, it is moderation compared with what Bakounin

aimed at. The master fell upon evil days toward the close of his career. He was unsuccessful with the French Communists; his movement in Southern Spain was unfortunate; Mazzini excommunicated him in the name of Spiritualism, and Karl Marx in the name of orthodox socialism. Yet he hoped to the very last that the great, general, wide-sweeping revolution would come, and overwhelm Europe beneath its ruins. He died, but he left behind him those who will carry out his plan. His followers are no longer contented to confine their effort to a single country or a single hemisphere; their field is the world."

Again Pleasant felt that Vera's eyes were fixed upon him with baleful force.

"On Russia, for the moment, the efforts of the party are concentrated, because it is there that absolute government has rendered the plan of Bakounin most dangerous to fulfil. We wish to grapple with our worst enemy first. The government has made some concessions in this generation, in the direction of a constitutional *régime;* and we lend our aid to those who are determined to have a constitution in Russia, because we feel that with a liberal Government replacing the old absolutism our progress toward the accomplishment of the idea of Bakounin will be much facilitated."

"The absolutism in Russia must and shall disappear," said Vera. "We have sworn it."

"And when you have obtained free institutions, a constitution, local liberties, and the rest, then you will proceed with your work of tearing down the present social fabric in Russia, and building the terrestrial paradise in its place?"

"Certainly," said Vera. "The free institutions are but the stepping-stones which we need and must have."

"It is a mighty scheme," said the young Indian, draw-

ing his breath hard. "Too mighty, too ambitious, I fear, to be realized."

"By man's will it can be done," said the Russian cynic. "To what else can you turn? Where else can you find justice? How else, except by convulsing society to its centre, can you bring it to a knowledge of its guilt? No; the world must be purged, and we must begin again."

"How do you know," said Vera, folding her hands and looking sharply at Pleasant, "that the principles of Bakounin are not applicable in America, in your new land with its old society? Have you thought what a sublime vengeance it would be if you could shock, to its very foundations, the society which has so cruelly persecuted and maltreated your race for generations? Why can it not be done? Who says it cannot? Have you thought of this?"

Had he thought of it? Had it not been lurking in his mind like a shadow for days, for weeks, for months?

"I *will* think of it," he said. "But for the moment I feel as if it would be a relief to talk of something else. This idea of turning over society is a mighty lurid one."

He tried to laugh, but he was oppressed. The cynic came to his aid with some remarks on the beauty of the evening, and an apology for having wearied him with the history of the great revolutionist. The young women engaged Vera and her spectacled friend in a discussion as to the value of the study of the natural sciences; and as the wheezy old horse drew them back to Geneva, under the bewitching light of the moon, Pleasant found that he was receiving much instruction as to the difference between old and new Nihilism, and their infinite variations.

He bade the party good night at the Pont du Mont Blanc, and hastened to his hotel. The porter put a

telegram into his hands, and he went up to his room before reading it, fancying that in it he should find only fresh cause for hatred of the white invaders of the country in which his poor Cherokees had made their final stand.

The despatch was repeated to him by the manager of the Bellevue Hotel at Berne, to whose care it was addressed, and contained the following words: —

"Mr. Pleasant Merrinott is urgently requested to come at once to Paris to meet Eric Harrelston at his office, at the bank, on important and immediate business. Prompt attention is solicited. Please answer. — HARRELSTON."

The youth allowed the telegram to slip from his hands, and it fluttered down to the floor. He would have liked to shout. He did not know what new disclosures lay behind this message, but he believed that he was mysteriously called once more toward Alice. For an instant he fancied that he could see her standing before him, as she stood on the terrace at Berne, when she was gazing at the Alpine fire on the far-off, snow-clad peaks. The sombre visions aroused by the story of Bakounin now vanished, as demons might flee away before the presence of an angel. Hope came to banish despair and doubt. He went to the open window and sat down where the moonlight could fall upon his face. The sweet tranquillity of nature comforted him. In the vast and tender embrace of night he felt a rest, a protection, which were delicious. He was vaguely conscious of a mighty directing power guiding all his feeble movements.

"I feel," he whispered to himself, "as if I had been saved out of the pit. That despatch has done it, I don't know how. I am glad to get out from — from under the shadow of Bakounin!"

He made his arrangements to take the morning train for Paris; sent an answer conceived thus, "Coming at

once!" to Mr. Harrelston; and mailed a brief note to Vera, saying that he was summoned suddenly to Paris, where he should be pleased to meet her again. Then he went to bed, and slept soundly for the first time for ten days.

CHAPTER XXI.

ON THE HOUSE-TOP.

The Paris home of Caro and her mother was in a small and cosy house in the Rue de l'Orient, high on that steep and picturesque hill which the Parisians call "Montmartre." Some say that it is called so because there stood upon the breezy height in ancient times a temple to the god Mars. Others affirm that Montmartre is the "Mount of Martyrs," and that St. Denis of blessed memory was beheaded there, and afterwards astonished his executioners by taking his head under his arm, and walking off, in most unconcerned fashion, across the plain, in search of a delectable site for a burial-place.

The streets which seam the sides of the great hill are the homes of thousands of literary and artistic celebrities; the tall gray houses, which in the damp and dreary Paris winter seem gloomy and forbidding, are filled with light, and life, and poetry, and romance within. Artists, musicians, actors, writers, flock about Montmartre's ribs like swallows at the eaves of a huge country barn. The summit is a bluff which has proved untameable by the ædiles, and is crowned by a venerable windmill, in the centre of a pretty garden, owned by an innkeeper, who serves dinners and wines to the people who clamber up to his domain for the sake of seeing all Paris lying

at their feet. In the long summer and autumn evenings music and fireworks attract to this bluff hundreds of couples of pale-faced, overworked artisans and seamstresses, who dance to the inspiring measures of the fiddle and the horn, and drink lemonade and raspberry cordial in the moonlight, while the old windmill solemnly extends its scraggy arms above their heads.

The garden overlooks the neglected upland on which were parked hundreds of cannon at the close of the siege of 1870–71. At sight of this plot of ground, with its waving grasses and weeds, its broken fences and dust-heaps, the dreadful phantasmagoria of the Commune seem once more to spring into view; for the desire of the people to possess the cannon stored there led to tragic and bloody events on the historic hill. The Rue des Rosiers, where the unhappy generals were sacrificed to the fury of the insurrection, is not far away; and if the stones could speak, what tales of massacre they could tell!

But the visitor to Montmartre on a bright, sunlit September afternoon, would think it one of the most peaceful and attractive spots that he had ever visited. So thought Caro and her mother when they first climbed thither, escorted by two clever American artists, who had long inhabited the quarter; and Mrs. Merlin, who abominated the "apartment system" so universal in France, and who was determined to rent a whole house, straightway fell a prey to the fascinations of the Rue de l'Orient. For in this small avenue, not far below the bluff, she found a tiny garden, and at its back a diminutive two-story dwelling, from a balcony niche in the roof of which one could look down over the whole vast capital, extending miles away on either side of the Seine — a colossal wilderness of roofs, an imposing and beautiful mass of infinitely varied architecture.

The upper story of the house was a large *atelier*,

through which had passed in previous years a shadowy procession of artists of all nationalities and every shade of talent and success. This room had been furnished as Caro's practice-chamber. A piano, hoisted up the narrow and inconvenient staircase by a series of ingenious mechanical devices originated by Mrs. Merlin herself, after a dozen French mechanics had declared the operation impossible, stood in the centre; and floods of sunshine came through the northern window to light up the inexpensive draperies on the walls, the flowers from the garden, the music-stand, and the few rather gaudy chairs which Caro's mother had purchased as a bargain at the Hôtel Drouot. When Caro was at her studies, and the light was too obtrusive, she drew a screen, managed by cords, across the window, and then the studio was filled with delicate and cool colour-tones, which harmonized completely with the notes of her voice.

Here the courageous girl had lived and worked for many long months, — months that hastened to swell to years, but of which she took no note, so thoroughly engrossed was she in the pursuit of her grand aim — a successful *début* upon the European stage. Here she had now and then received the visit of some foreign musician or composer of note, attracted by the enthusiastic descriptions which her principal instructor, Mélari, offered of her person and her progress; and here from time to time Mrs. Merlin gave a reception, to which came many languid ladies from the "upper circles" of that mysterious entity denominated "The American Colony;" young and ambitious, as well as elderly and despairing, painters; genteel-looking and penniless Russians, Spaniards, Italians, and Frenchmen, fond of an evening occasionally in the international Bohemia, and willing to flutter, with moth-like adoration, around the flame of American beauty; and young ladies who were aspirants for the same sort of success which

Caro sought, and who praised her to her face as freely as they indulged in detraction of her when her back was turned.

Here, too, in winter evenings, when the rain sobbed outside, and the furious wind cried and threatened in the garden, and Caro was weary with long striving, and oppressed with the petty cares which her poverty engendered, she often threw herself into a roomy, leathern-covered arm-chair which stood near the piano, and sat for hours, white-faced and wet-eyed, dreading the future and almost doubting God; — the victim of that terrible, overwhelming prostration which follows prolonged artistic effort, as moonless, terror-black nights often follow the most cheerful days. Good Mrs. Merlin slept peacefully, worn out with toil, in her small bedroom below; but Caro kept her vigil and nourished her silent soul-ache until it left a mark upon her sweet face.

Oh, tender yet heroic young hearts of striving maidens from the great Republic beyond the sea! how have you bled and suffered in the watches of the night, and shrank away from the cynical snarl and roar of the great foreign capital! And yet you have made no complaints; and we, who have known you at your toil, and with a certain reverence have followed you in your careers, and rejoiced with your successes, and respected you in your failures, and been proud of your virtue and honour and noble persistence, can never forget you! We are glad with you in your gladness, and we sorrow with you when you are in despair.

Poor Caro did not know how many sympathetic souls were near her, how many would joyfully have helped her to bear the burden of the dread discouragement, of the supreme endeavour; and she often rebelled against the divine law of compensation which inexorably requires that those who have walked upon the mountain-tops hand

in hand with inspiration shall descend into the valleys of humiliation, and be environed with the thick darkness of distrust. Had she been able to realize that all about her in the immense capital of art were thousands of hearts, suffering, aspiring, dreading, toiling, as she suffered, aspired, dreaded, and toiled, she might have felt more willing to walk humbly beneath her load.

A fortnight after her return from Switzerland, Caro sat nearly all night in the old arm-chair at the end of an exhaustive day of successful study, at home and at Mélari's. The next morning she awoke from a broken slumber into which she had fallen after she had crawled, at dawn, to her small bed in the room next her mother's, feeling feverish, petulant, and faint. Mrs. Merlin, who kept a servant only for the sake of appearances — for she insisted upon doing the greater part of the housework herself, and, as she phrased it, "cooked every morsel that Caro put into her head" — came in with a fragrant cup of coffee for her daughter, and was alarmed at the girl's flushed cheeks and haggard look. She placed the coffee on a little table within reach of Caro's arm, and, sitting down on the edge of the bed, began to pluck convulsively at the corner of the right sleeve of her morning wrapper. Caro knew that when her mother indulged in this gesture a fit of tears was close at hand; and she felt a choking in her own throat as she gazed at the simple, honest, worn face, now visibly distressed by the workings of some inward grief. She laid her thin white hand gently upon her mother's roughened fingers.

"Don't worry, ma!" she said. "The money is certain to come. It is only a question of waiting, and we must learn to put up with a little inconvenience."

Mrs. Merlin's tears began to flow. "It ain't the money that worries me, Caro," she sobbed; "it's you. Oh, daughter, what *is* it that makes you set up all night?

I know you did it; you haven't slept a wink! What's the good of tellin' me not to worry, when you are worryin' yourself to pieces. Heigh-ho! I wish we were safe back in Illinoy."

"Don't cry, unless you wish to unfit me for my day's study," said Caro.

Mrs. Merlin made an effort to control her emotion, and Caro, sitting up and taking the coffee in one hand, began a trill with her clear, sweet voice, as if to make sure that she could still sing.

"Come, cheer up, mother!" she said. "Don't you see how cheerful I am!" Her lips quivered, and the shadow of a mortal sadness fell on her face as she said these words.

"I feel," said Mrs. Merlin, musingly, "jest like I did the night of the fire in Chicago. I feel like I didn't know nothin'. Don't you remember, after we was burnt out, they found me, separated from the rest of you, settin' in a waggon — and the Lord knows how I ever come in that waggon! — and they says to me, says they, 'You must get out of this; the fire's spreadin'.' And I says, 'Well, tell me where to go.' And they says, 'What's your name, and where did you live?' and I says, 'I don't know.' And they says, '*What!* don't know what your own name is and where you lived?' I says, 'No, I don't,' — and I didn't. Then they asked me my husband's name, and my children's names, and my friends' names, and I couldn't tell 'em, for the fire had clean drove everything out of my head. And I didn't find out who I was until more'n an hour afterward. Wal, I feel to-day like I did then — all of a daze; an' I don't care what happens to me." Mrs. Merlin lowered her voice as she said these last words, and began to pluck at her sleeve once more.

"Well," said Caro, "we shall see what the day brings forth. Our position is somewhat awkward, but we must make the best of it."

The two women had committed the feminine imprudence of nearly exhausting their slender stock of money before they could count on any income from the several rather unreliable sources on which they were nevertheless compelled to rely. A "shrinkage" in the value of the small property which the Merlins possessed in a prosperous village not far from Chicago had proved most unlucky for Caro and her mother; it brought them, in a quarterly payment, much less than they had been counting upon, and at the same time one of Caro's newspaper engagements failed her. Mélari's lesson-bill was due, and so were various annoying accounts at a dressmaker's; and, in addition to these disagreeable debts, Caro saw with fear the day approaching when the "ready money," so indispensable in Paris, would be gone. Her only hope of bridging over a period of serious financial trouble now lay in the arrival of certain moneys, the proceeds of a draft which she had made on a Western editor who had professed himself always willing to pay for her contributions "in advance," to the extent of any reasonable sum.

Caro believed that this assurance was a never-failing bank on which she could draw in the darkest moments; and she was in daily expectation of receiving a message from a banking agent in the Rue de Provence, who had taken the draft for collection, to call and receive its proceeds. With that sturdy independence which was part of her character, she had put away from her all thought of appealing to Alice Harrelston or other acquaintances for temporary assistance. Her courage was firm, but her mind was troubled. The thought that Mélari's wonted playful production of the monthly bill for lessons might soon cause her a painful embarrassment filled her with horror.

She drank her coffee, sent her mother into the garden, and sang as she dressed. The sadness which had crept into her life since she had begun to distrust the Stanislas

whom she so fiercely loved in secret betrayed itself a little in her voice. Her limbs were weary and her head was dizzy as she came forth from her chamber to the duties of the day. Her mother met her at the door opening into the garden with a letter in her hand.

"Perhaps this is something about the money, Caro," she said. "It's addressed to you."

Caro broke the seal eagerly.

It was a polite note from the banking firm which had forwarded Caro's draft upon her Western friend, inclosing notice that the unlucky document was protested, because, said a scrawl in the blank spaces of a printed form, the sight of which made Caro's brow hot, the person on whom it was drawn "was absent, and had left no instructions." In short, Caro's paper was protested for non-acceptance, and she was charged with the expenses of the protest.

She let the papers flutter from her nerveless fingers to the floor, and, turning slowly away from her mother, went up to her study-room and sat down dejectedly in the arm-chair in which she had passed the greater part of the night. She did not know what to do or which way to turn; her lack of knowledge of the world hampered her cruelly; and imagination forthwith supplied her with a hundred horrors, consequent on this temporary lack of money, from the contemplation of which she shrank back, appalled and faint. It seemed to her that everything in the universe was in conspiracy against her, to wreck her happiness, and to ruin her chances for the future. Mrs. Merlin did not come to comfort her; for the good woman knew that when Caro was in one of these moods she would not accept consolation. So the girl sat, lonely and forlorn, until, under the influence of a strange impulse which she could not explain, she sprang from her seat and fled up the narrow spiral staircase which led to the balcony set in the edge of the house-top.

Great Paris lay below her, magnificent in the autumn sunshine. Miles on miles away stretched the Babylonian labyrinth of streets, of gleaming roofs, of squares, of palaces, of lofty columns; and a confused murmur drifted vaguely through the air. Her gaze rested on the Triumphal Arch, superb upon its hill studded with princely residences; then on the glittering dome of the Invalides; and then was fixed upon the summit of the Opera House, where she could descry the figure of Apollo, holding up his gilded lyre, as if invoking inspiration from the heavens. Beyond the Seine the serried ranks of the houses seemed innumerable; the twin towers of Notre Dame and the majestic cupola of the Pantheon were the only landmarks that she knew.

The immensity of the city at her feet oppressed, almost alarmed her. For the first time in her life she realized that she was but one timid, striving creature surrounded by millions who were utterly indifferent to her life or death; who were ready to fawn at her feet if she could startle them with the priceless treasures of a glorious voice, and equally willing to laugh at and to scorn her if she failed. A less delicate and less refined nature would have been inflamed with ambition by this outlook over the famous capital, with its tremendous accumulation of wealth, its marvels of luxury and taste, and would have vowed itself to greater efforts than before for the possession of many of these things. But Caro, on her airy perch, felt for the moment as a disembodied spirit might feel when rising for ever above all the pomps and vanities of the world. She saw life in epitome, and in all its romantic and terrifying graduations; the ducal mansion and the hospital, the church and the dead-house, the prison and the palace, the hostelry with wide-open doors, and the cemetery with its yawning ditches; the insolence of ill-gotten wealth, and the impotence of the grovelling, underfed artisan; the

opulence of grand museums crowded with marbles and renowned canvases, and the pinched and unpicturesque poverty of the seamstress's garret in a sunless alley; the brilliant procession of carriages on the road to the Bois, and the heartrending pathos of the cheap funeral, with its unpainted coffin naked on the pine hearse, and its miserable accompaniment of maudlin professional mourners. And as the sight of the city brought these visions before her mind, she shuddered, and a weariness of life seized upon her. This comes often enough to the young; it is only when we have learned how hard it is to live that we cling to living, as the wretch buffeted by the angry seas clings to his fragment of driftwood.

While she fancied that these mournful reflections were forcing her into more profound depths of dejection than any she had yet known, the kindly warmth of the sun was doing her good. She leaned on the iron railing of the balcony, and presently she closed her eyes. Then the sombre train of images vanished. For one instant Caro saw a picture of a young girl receiving the frantic applause of an audience in a closely packed theatre, and she fancied that she heard the sound of music, and scented the perfume of flowers thrown upon the stage as offerings to the fair singer.

"I believe I'm half asleep," said Caro. "I must go in; the sun is too hot."

"Who do you think is downstairs, daughter?" said Mrs. Merlin's voice in Caro's ear.

Caro turned quickly. Her mother, breathing hard after clambering up two flights of stairs, stood looking gravely and compassionately at her.

"I'm sure I can't imagine. Why don't you tell me who it is?"

"It's Stanislas. He came bouncing in as merry as a boy ten years old, and making excuses for his morning

call. I thought he was not coming to Paris for months yet."

"So did I," said Caro, looking a little paler than when she was alone. She glanced sharply at her mother. "Remember, not one word about — our — affairs!"

"Wal, now," said Mrs. Merlin, "of course we don't want to depend on strangers, but I have no doubt that Stanislas would help us in a minute, and you know he is rich as a Jew!"

"Mother!" said the girl, in a smothered voice. "I am ashamed of you! Ask help — and of him!"

"Very well, Mrs. Lofty," said the old lady. "I'm sorry that you take your mother for a fool. Will your royal majesty condescend to receive the gentleman?"

"Forgive me, mother," murmured Caro, stepping forward and pressing her feverish lips against Mrs. Merlin's wrinkled cheek. "I am cross this morning. Please ask Stanislas to come up here. This beautiful view will delight him."

Caro had done her mother injustice. Mrs. Merlin would have starved before asking a foreigner for aid, but she had a motive for her remark about Stanislas.

"I'm glad I said that," she muttered, mournfully, as she went down to the small parlour. "I know now, from the way she started, that she loves him. Oh dear! what will come of it all?"

Stanislas stood for a moment, shading his eyes with his hand, when he came out upon the balcony. Caro was lovely in her simple morning dress, with a white rose at her throat, and the sunshine on her chestnut hair. She looked carefully at the musician, and found that his handsome face was a trifle fatigued. There were dark circles beneath the blue-black eyes, and their fascinating glance seemed somewhat dulled by anxiety and pain. But the

charm, the nameless charm, was still there for her. She felt it, she owned it.

"Why are you not in London, Monsieur the Unsteady?" she said presently, holding out her hand, which he hastened forward to take, and to relinquish only when she tried to withdraw it. "We did not expect you for weeks yet."

"How beautiful!" he cried, enthusiastically, with a sweeping gesture which seemed to comprehend every thing within his vision's range. "Beautiful — the lady most of all! and that splendid Paris beyond! Ravishing!" He lowered his voice, "And if I came here, away from my concerts, because I desire to be near you, would you reprove me?"

Caro trembled, and leaned against the balcony rail for support.

"Is that a Polish or a Russian compliment, Monsieur Stanislas?" she said.

"It is the truth that I am no longer myself when I am not near you. I have cancelled my engagements for the present, and come back to Paris. Will you forgive me if I say it is because I wish to breathe the same air with you?"

"Given up your concerts!" said Caro, in amazement. Then she grew rosy red. Although she was determined not to accept it, there was something inexpressibly delightful to her in this homage from the man whom she had reverenced until she began to distrust him.

"You are angry?"

"No; I am only sorry that you ——"

"Ah, bah! it does not matter a feather's weight! What are concerts to me? Have I not given them since I was sixteen? They horrify me, those concerts! No; here I am, and here in Paris I will remain, if you do not banish me because I have spoken ——"

CHAPTER XXII.

GOLDEN MOMENTS.

STANISLAS sat down on the piano-stool, and let his hands fall helplessly in his lap. There was a flash of indignation in Mrs. Merlin's eyes, as she looked up at the young man, after seating her pallid daughter in the old arm-chair, and winning her back to consciousness by the use of restoratives hastily brought from below. The mother did not like the manner in which the musician contemplated the insensible Caro. It was certain that there was no compassion in his look. His æsthetic sense was pleased, but his sympathy was not aroused. On the house-top he had stretched out his arms to catch the falling Caro because it had seemed to him that it would be fine to fold the fair young creature for a moment to his breast, not because he was particularly anxious to save her from a fall. In another mood it might have occurred to him that it was vastly flattering to see a young maiden swoon away and drop at his feet because he indulged in a mad declaration of love for her, and he would have — let her sink before him. Now, as he sat facing her, and watching the returning life-current as it stole into her cheeks, and as it made her lips tremble, he was trying to imagine what she would do and say when she remembered his frenzied professions. He took a lazy pleasure in this — such pleasure as he found in daintily caressing the white keys of his piano with his

whiter fingers now and then—not forcing them to give out any sound, but silently improvising. Mrs. Merlin, with her unerring mother's instinct, felt that Stanislas was, in some inexplicable manner, wrong and insincere; and the phrase which came rushing to her lips, and which she narrowly escaped saying aloud in her excitement, was, "Why, he does not love her. He looks at her like a child looks at a plaything!"

Caro opened her eyes widely, and the first object that she saw was the musician's handsome face. She looked at him steadily, without any suggestion of timidity in her gaze. Stanislas was himself abashed by this frank and adoring contemplation of his features; in his soul there was a momentary twinge of reproach; and he could almost fancy that he heard a voice saying reproachfully to him, "What have you done? What have you done?" Presently he turned his eyes uneasily away from Caro and rose.

The girl was determined to be happy. She felt as if a great burden had fallen from her back, and the vague suspicion which she had cherished about Vera was gone now. It had melted like morning dew in the sunshine of the love of Stanislas, and life once more seemed worth living. He had come—drawn to her by irresistible forces which he could not explain; had brought her his love and laid it at her feet. She felt a delicious thrill of triumph. New visions of a sensuous artistic existence, full of glittering lights, music, perfumes, flowers, plaudits of enraptured throngs, and worship of adoring thousands, arose before her. *Now* she could do anything and everything necessary for success. All her old weariness was gone, and she smiled as she thought of her bitter hours of doubt and despair. A new world had dawned upon her, and she felt a great thirst for its glories, its pleasures, and its sublime sensations.

By-and-by Stanislas recovered from his confusion and looked at Caro again. Mrs. Merlin ran downstairs for a minute or two, to get a fresh instalment of remedies for dizziness.

Caro spoke first. "Did I float down through the roof?" she said. "I am at a loss to know how I came here."

The musician was at her side in an instant.

"You are angel enough to have wings," he answered in a deep whisper. Then he bent downward, and said aloud, "Oh, Caro, forgive me for my rudeness, my vulgar haste. I swear to you that I could not help it—that I did not know—I was forced to speak."

She made no answer, but looked up at him with the same earnest, loyal gaze which had so confused him a moment before. Her firm lips were tremulous and her blue eyes were filled with tears. Her silence was eloquent.

"Do you know," he went on, "I was going to speak to you, about—about—to tell you all this in the garden at Berne that night when—when your worthy mother came pouncing down upon us like—like——"

"Be careful, sir, to what you compare my mother," said the girl, a faint gleam of fun stealing in among the tears in her eyes. "But you can say like a hawk on two innocent little chickens, if you wish. Ma *was* startling."

"Yes," said the musician, dryly, "she *was*. But now, at last, I have told you. And it has startled you more than she startled us. How can I atone? Do anything to me except send me away."

Banish him from her sight! She would as soon have thought of banishing the sun from the sky. He had become so firmly rooted in her life that she felt as if to lose him would be death to her.

"Speak, Caro, *chérie*, a word to tell me that I may

hope — that I may stay at your side — my beautiful singer — my treasure — my saint — my dream!"

Once more the honest calm of the American maiden's look confused him. He felt that each word was registered upon her heart; that she was not now abashed and overcome, but glad and proud, and that she was not ashamed to confess her tender and steadfast affection for him. His face was close to hers; his nervous right hand was laid boldly upon both of hers; his lips touched hers — O golden moment! He stood apart from her, humbly waiting, as he had waited on the house-top, for his answer.

"Oh, Stanislas!" she said, "stay, stay, for ever as you are, young and noble and — and loving. You have guessed my secret, and I will trust it in your keeping. I will trust you — I will trust you. And oh! do not say another word to me now!"

He came back to her; he covered her hands with kisses; he whispered passionate and endearing words in her ear. Then, hearing footsteps below, he went hastily to the piano, and, sitting down, began playing with magnificent emphasis and expression Mendelssohn's "Wedding March." When Mrs. Merlin got back to Caro's arm-chair she found the girl with her head thrown back, her face quite pale, and a strange smile at her lips. There was the gleam of a new hope on the young singer's brow. Life had a profound meaning for her now. The old lady sighed, and turned away her head. Her daughter's happiness frightened her.

"Colonel Cliff's downstairs, Caro," said Mrs. Merlin; "shall I ask him to come up? It looks like everybody thought that we hold receptions in the morning."

Stanislas was apparently absorbed in his music. Caro would have preferred to be alone with him and the joyous harmonies which he evoked from the piano, but she said —

"Certainly. Mother — don't — say — that I have been dizzy. He won't wish to hear of our infirmities; he will

be entirely taken up with Alice's illness. He worships the very ground that she walks on. Please ask him to come at once."

Mrs. Merlin obediently summoned the Colonel from below. He came up the stairs, two at a bound, in his light graceful way, and pausing before Caro's chair, made his bow with a refined and airy mannerism which showed that he had not yet laid aside his military training. There was much of the stateliness of the soldier still visible underneath the civil disguise of an English riding suit, leathern gloves, and gaiters. Colonel Cliff had evidently been on horseback, for he held a whip in one hand; and Caro, as she greeted him, inquired if he had been in pursuit of adventures, like Don Quixote, and if he had chanced to have a tilt with the windmill on Montmartre's summit.

"Not so," he answered, laughing, although he looked worried and vexed. "I have just arrived from Don Quixote's country, but I am no Quixote myself. If there is any distressed damsel to succour I offer my services, but I see that you already have one defender." He went to shake hands with Stanislas, who said he was delighted to see him.

"*Écoutez*, Mr. Cliff," said Stanislas, after their salutations, "if Mademoiselle Merlin were in the category of distressed damsels, do you know I do not think that she would require us as defenders. American girls always take care of themselves."

"Indeed they do," said Mrs. Merlin, with a slight ring of defiance in her voice.

"And that," said Stanislas, languidly striking key after key of the piano, "is — the reason — that — I — adore them — all."

"The old method, I see, Monsieur Stanislas," remarked the Colonel, dryly. "Still adoring several millions of goddesses at the same time! What courage —— !" He

stopped short, for a look on the musician's face told him that he was to go no farther.

"The attributes of all these millions must be combined for me in one person," said Stanislas, "and it is that person that I shall adore." He looked up from the piano, and Caro felt that his gaze rested for a moment on her, then upon her mother, then on the Colonel — as if he were judging of the effect of his remark upon each of them.

"The idee of a musician adorin' anything but his music!" said Mrs. Merlin. "He lives in a fancy world, and can't get down to realities — not even long enough to find out what happiness is like."

"Have you seen the Harrelstons, Colonel?" said Caro, abruptly.

"Not the ladies. I arrived yesterday, and this morning, as I went for a gallop in the Bois, I met Mr. Harrelston driving into town. He tells me that his daughter has been seriously ill with a kind of fever since her return from Switzerland; that her mother is quite worn out with watching her, and that at present they can receive no one. How odd that Miss Harrelston should be ill! She was the picture of health when I left her. I — I thought possibly you could tell me more about it; in fact, I may as well tell you that I trotted over here both in search of news, and to give myself the pleasure of seeing you once more."

He tapped his gaiters impatiently with his whip. Caro smiled, but so faintly that the good Colonel did not perceive it.

"We've ben right worried about Alice," said Mrs. Merlin, looking up at the curtain drawn across the great north window. "She's so emotional! Her feelings weigh on her terribly."

Colonel Cliff looked from Caro's mother to Caro, mutely demanding an explanation of this last somewhat enigmatical remark, but none was vouchsafed.

"At what time was she taken ill?" finally asked Colonel Cliff.

"Two or three days after our return from Switzerland she called here, in the afternoon, and was as charming as usual," said Caro. "She seemed full of life and gaiety, and two days after that came a note from her mother saying that Alice was in a raging fever. We called, but the servants said the house was closed to visitors, and we only received a message from Mrs. Harrelston to say that she was 'very much alarmed.'"

Colonel Cliff pulled the glove off from his left hand, but hastily put it on again, with a look of vexation at having betrayed his uneasiness.

"I tell Caro," said Mrs. Merlin, who had never quite learned prudence in speech, "that the Injun is at the bottom of it all."

"The Indian!" cried the Colonel, sitting down and looking a trifle frightened. "What do you mean?"

Colonel Cliff's tone showed the old lady that she had made a mistake.

"Do you think that Mr. Merrinott has the evil eye, Mrs. Merlin?" said Stanislas, "and that he has bewitched Miss Harrelston?"

The Colonel frowned, and looked at Stanislas as if he would have liked to throw him downstairs.

"Wal," said Mrs. Merlin, slowly, "I think that if the Injun *had* the force to bewitch Alice — I say *if* he had — that she would, on her side, have strength enough to — to ——"

"Overcome his witcheries," suggested Caro.

"Caro, don't take the words out of your ma's mouth. Overcome his witchery — if it most half killed her."

"Well, wonders will never cease. We are now introduced to Pleasant Merrinott, the half-breed hero of the border, as an enchanter," said Colonel Cliff, scornfully. "What next? Why, I saw him this morning at eight

o'clock, in the Rue de la Paix, scowling at every cockney that stared at him, and I went up and spoke to him. He was not over glad to see me. You know that he doesn't love me. He has just arrived from Geneva, and was very much elated at the prospect of a forthcoming interview with Mr. Harrelston on the same old worn-out topic, the wrongs of the Nation. But as for Miss Harrelston, he did not even inquire about her; and when I asked him where he had parted with you all, he simply said, 'At Berne,' and changed the subject."

"Parted with us? He did not even come to say good-bye to us — or to the Harrelstons," said Mrs. Merlin.

"Oh, he has no manners; and you did not expect them from him."

"Well, yes, I think we *did* rather expect them," said Caro.

"And perhaps Miss Harrelston was a little surprised at the absence of them," said Stanislas, dryly.

Colonel Cliff looked sharply again at the musician.

"By the way," he said to him, "Mr. Merrinott surprised *me* by speaking, in most enthusiastic terms, of a lady whom he had met in Berne and subsquently in Geneva, and whom he called your sister. I was under the impression that you told me — one night at Meiringen — that you were quite alone in the world — that you possessed neither kith nor kin."

There was a faint cry, and Caro sprang to her feet. Her face was white. A tall pile of music-books stood on the corner of the piano. The girl ran to it, managed to give it an adroit push with her elbow, and sent it to the floor.

"That has been toppling for some moments," she said, "and I thought I could jump in time to save it." She turned away from her mother's inquisitive look as Colonel Cliff hastened to pick up the scattered books.

"Sister Vera?" responded Stanislas, composedly. "Did Mr. Merrinott see her in Geneva? Are you sure that I did not mention her to you? She is so eccentric, poor girl!" He sighed. "No; I do not often speak of her. She came from Zurich, where she has been studying, to Berne, to see me, and it was there that our friends met her."

"Oh, then the ladies have seen her, and I am sure will echo Mr. Merrinott's compliments," said the Colonel, whose face wore a puzzled look.

"Certainly," said Mrs. Merlin. "Though, as to studyin' medicine, I did hint to her once that I thought she was layin' up misery for herself by enterin' into men's employments."

Caro had now recovered, and she turned and looked at Stanislas. His eyes met hers. His gaze was calm, sincere; her doubt, which had sprung up anew with savage force, settled slowly, almost reluctantly, back into that recess of her soul, where it still lingered. Let it linger! She would fight it! It would be too terribly hard and bitter to find that Stanislas —— No; she put the thought away as unworthy of her. And could she not unravel the mystery, if any mystery there were, in Vera's existence?

The conversation turned upon music, and the vicissitudes of young ladies engaged in obtaining a musical education in Continental cities. Colonel Cliff told some horrifying stories of heart-breaking failures, and Stanislas gave a picturesque sketch of the brilliant success of two or three American girls whom he had known. Presently the servant arrived to say that the man holding the Colonel's horse would hold him no longer, and they all went down into the garden together.

"Do not stand in the sun," whispered Stanislas to Caro, with a lover-like solicitude. "And do not work

to-day. Rest, think, try to forgive me. To-morrow, when Mélari comes to give his lesson I shall come with him, may I not? And I shall remain a moment after he has gone, to tell you that — I love you."

A russet leaf fluttered down from one of the gnarled trees above their heads, and rested for an instant on Caro's bosom. Then it flew airily away again, and would have fallen had not the musician caught it deftly and carried it to his lips.

"A souvenir! A memorial of the happiest day of my life," he whispered.

"To-morrow — we — shall — meet!" said Caro, and then her mother called to her from the gate to come and see the Colonel's horse.

"Bring us news of Alice, if you have any, to-morrow, Colonel," said the girl.

"Thanks. I will. I will get news — from the Indian, if I can have it from no one else," answered Colonel Cliff, with a curious smile.

Stanislas walked beside the horseman to the end of the Rue de l'Orient. He stopped there, and laying his hand on the saddle, looked up at the Colonel.

"I have made a little discovery about the Indian — about Mr. Merrinott," he said, flinching a bit before Colonel Cliff's keen gaze, "and I think you ought to know what it is. If you feel inclined to promise me to keep it entirely to yourself — confidential in the very strictest sense — I will tell you what it is."

"Why, yes," said the Colonel, scratching the horse's ear with his whip, and speaking thoughtfully, "if it is anything that I ought to know you may tell it, and count on my discretion."

"Well," said the musician, gravely, "I tell you that Pleasant Merrinott — who seems so innocent of the world and all its tricks — is tainted with Socialistic notions, is

in relation with some of the leading Socialists of the time, and is at this moment entangled in a Nihilist web of conspiracy."

"Indeed! And how did you find this out, may I ask?"

"Accidentally. And I tell you because it may guide you in your relations with him."

"How can his opinions affect me, Monsieur Stanislas?"

The musician removed his hand from the saddle, stepped back, and saluted the Colonel courteously. "*Au revoir*," he said. "I only mentioned it because it might be embarrassing for you — or for — for your friends to be connected with Mr. Pleasant Merrinott, in case any scandal should arise from his taste for conspiracy."

"Thanks. I will bear it in mind. Good morning." And the Colonel galloped off to the outer boulevards, where he gave his horse a tremendous run. As he drew rein not far from the Triumphal Arch, he fell to musing on what Stanislas had told him. He had heard much about the musician's career, from some friends in Spain, during his journey, and had formed a new estimate of the character of Stanislas.

"I will observe Mr. Merrinott closely, Monsieur the pianist," he said to himself; "but I will keep a sharp eye on you also, for the next few weeks."

CHAPTER XXIII.

A LOVING STRATAGEM.

'ELL, Mr. Harrelston," said Pleasant, stalking into banker's private office, and coming straight up to the : over which the gentleman was bent in an attitude of deepest attention, "you see that I have lost no time beying your summons. I hope that nothing extraor- ry has happened in the Nation. I haven't heard for ht smart——"

ıe banker looked up hastily, and the Indian was a startled to see a deep flush — either of anger or tion — settle upon Mr. Harrelston's fine frank face. it passed away almost as speedily as it had come, and sant was relieved to see Mr. Harrelston arise and him his hand, and to hear him say —

I am glad you are here, Mr. Merrinott. Excuse me ive minutes; I have a few signatures to attend to, then I shall be at liberty. Please sit down." He d his secretaries one by one to his desk, gave each a instructions, and told them to remove their work to her room. Then he rang a bell and his cashier ap- ed. "If any one asks for me, say that I am not to en until after four. Let it be especially understood I am on no account to be disturbed."

easant sat down, and soon found himself alone with banker, who was signing cheques, documents, and

letters with the cool and careful precision of the methodical business man. A window was open, affording an outlook upon a pretty square, where tall sycamores stood ranged in regular rows; where nursemaids in white caps and blue ribbons were lazily promenading with small children; and where there was a perennial caucus of red-faced and shiny-hatted coachmen, who were regulating affairs of State in a noisy conversation, while they polished their whip-handles, or fed their horses on small wisps of hay.

The bright afternoon sun on the dark green leaves, the aroma of the flowering plants on the window-ledge, and the bronze figure of Charlemagne, in his warrior's garb, on the marble mantelpiece, pleased the young man. He studied the scene bit by bit, and was quite absorbed in his study when Mr. Harrelston arose and carried out an oblong wicker tray piled high with papers. Returning, the banker closed the door, dropped a heavy Algerian curtain in front of it, looked around as if to assure himself that no one had managed to conceal himself under the tables, and then settled down into his chair with the air of a man who has something very serious to say. He was evidently embarrassed as to making a beginning, and so Pleasant said —

"I received your despatch just as I was ——"

"Mr. Merrinott," said the banker, who did not seem to have heard Pleasant's words, "you are a very young man, and I am old enough to be your father."

It would have been impossible to dispute this proposition, and Pleasant had no desire to try, so he sat waiting for what was to follow.

"And so I want to take the liberty of speaking to you very freely, and to ask you not to be offended or disturbed. Oh! I know that you are quite susceptible, and I ask you not to judge hastily anything I may say, and not suddenly to reject anything I may propose."

A gleam of suspicion shot into Pleasant's great black eyes. "Have our opponents in the land matter sent a delegation here, Mr. Harrelston? Because it is my duty to tell you at once, sir, that we cannot enter into any compromises, any arrangements of any kind whatsoever, with those people. *That* is entirely out of the question."

Mr. Harrelston took up a rosewood ruler lying before him, went through the motions of executing an imaginary vengeance upon an imaginary fly, laid down the ruler, then took it up anew, and at last said, frankly, and with a perceptible tremor in his tones —

"It is not about business that I wish to talk with you just now. It is something much more grave, much more important and interesting. It is about saving the life of a young girl."

Pleasant arose, tossing back his long black hair, and breathing quickly. He was a noble figure, as he stood erect before the banker, instinct with pulsating life, his deep chest heaving with emotion, his dark eyes gleaming, his arms slightly raised as if ready to grasp a weapon with which to defend every one committed to his care. The banker looked at him approvingly, yet it cost him an effort greater than any except himself could understand to approve the young man. Before he had sent the despatch to Pleasant in Geneva he had gone through a mental struggle which had revealed to him depths of pride never heretofore fathomed in his soul. But love and duty had conquered. He was all frankness now.

"The life of a young girl!" repeated Pleasant, with a vague premonition of coming sorrow.

"Of one who is very dear to me," said Mr. Harrelston; "dear to us both, I think."

Pleasant could not believe that he heard aright. He looked earnestly, almost piteously, at the banker, mutely imploring him to explain. But the banker's eyes were

dim with tears, and he was turning his face away to hide his honest emotion. At last the Indian's amazement and suspense and fear all found utterance in one word, and that was "Alice!"

The banker arose and laid his hand on Pleasant's shoulder. "Yes, my boy," he said, brokenly, "Alice, my daughter, is dangerously ill; a fever seized upon her shortly after her return from Switzerland, and for a while it seemed as if it would burn her young life out. Stop — listen — remember — Mr. Merrinott — that you owe me attention ——"

"Alice ill, in danger — where is she? Let me go to her at once!" said the Indian.

"But listen!" Mr. Harrelston felt as helpless as if he were trying to control a volcano; for Pleasant, wild with anxiety, was likely to burst through all restraint. "My daughter, in her illness, has been delirious; and it was in watching with my poor wife by her bedside that I discovered something which I need not tell you surprised me very much. My wife had told me of your appearance at Meiringen, of your visit and acquaintance with Alice there, but she said nothing — apparently knew nothing to indicate that you — in short, that you had completely won my daughter's affection and confidence — had even told her of your professed love for her, and then had unaccountably and hurriedly left her, nor spoken nor written a word to her since! Confound it, sir! it makes my blood boil to think what pain you have given. There, I don't mean that. I don't know what I mean — or — yes, I do know only too well; I know that whatever you have done, whatever you have *not* done, your presence here, and near my poor child, is indispensable now, and so I have sent for you. I have told you enough to enable you to explain yourself; I have humbled myself because — because I believed that by so doing I could save my daughter's life and prevent her

happiness from being wrecked. And now, sir, — come, sir — speak out — explain. What have you done? what have you failed to do? what sent you to Meiringen? what do you mean to do?"

Pleasant sat down, looking the banker squarely in the face. He saw that Mr. Harrelston was far from pleased with the discovery which he had made; but he was so overjoyed at the revelation that Alice loved him — that she had expected him to come to her to tell her again of his love — that he could scarcely contain his exultation. Where was now his firm resolve to perish under the weight of self-inflicted woe rather than to swerve from his determination to be faithful to his race? Where were all the impassioned resolutions made beside the racing waters of the Aar, at Berne, on the morning after those delicious moments with Alice in the garden? They had vanished; and he was aghast at the wrong which he had done to the sweet girl who had accepted his adoration and his love, and had unhesitatingly given her own in return.

"Promise me that you will let me see her — be near her once more," he said, in entreating tones.

"I believe it is my duty to do so," said Mr. Harrelston, who was now a little calmer. "Why, Mr. Merrinott, I almost believe that her life depends on it! Perhaps I have done wrong, but for the moment it seems to me that I have done the only thing that was possible."

"Mr. Harrelston," said the young man, bending his head a little forward, and casting down his eyes, "I have been a fool."

The banker looked relieved, after Pleasant had made this confession. It soothed his wounded pride a bit to believe that this strange, impulsive youth had, in his inexperience, and influenced by brooding over the wrongs of his race, done or said something foolish, to which Alice's distress of mind might be attributed. It was because he

had recognized in Pleasant, the first times that he had ever seen him, one so original, so removed from the ordinary methods of thought and habits of men of his age, that he had now decided to call upon him for an explanation. The banker had not told his wife of this decision; on the contrary, he had roundly scolded her for allowing the romantic young Indian to come across the path of the unworldly and generous Alice, and had hinted that he considered Pleasant little better than an adventurer. Then he had undertaken the experiment of summoning Pleasant to Paris, and was about to appeal to the youth to do all that he could to save Alice from the illness which was evidently the fruit of a sudden secret sorrow, when Pleasant met him more than half-way by volunteering his confession, and prefacing it by the frank statement that he had been a fool.

"When I came to your hotel in Interlaken, for the first time, on business," continued Pleasant, "I saw your daughter. She was standing in a corner, with her hands filled with flowers, and I thought she was the most beautiful creature that I had ever seen. But it was not her beauty that impressed me. It was — it was as if ——" said the young man, struggling timidly for the choice of an expression, "as if her face had been printed on my heart. Well, Mr. Harrelston, I reckon I'm not exactly like other folks — I couldn't rest until I had seen her again; and I think you have found out by this time that, as soon as I could, I went to Meiringen because she was there, and because I wished to be near her. Well, sir, I stayed there until I got news which I thought made it necessary for me to return to the Nation as fast as I could go. I told her of the unjust and cruel way in which our people were treated, and she — well, sir, I think she approved of my resolutions, and she gave me plenty of advice. Why, Mr. Harrelston, your daughter was the first person that

ever sympathized with me! It was like she knew my thoughts before I could put them into words."

"O mischievous Sympathy!" thought Mr. Harrelston, "are you not always the forerunner of Love?"

"And then, sir, then I went away, and I might as well tell you that I had a big fight with myself not to tell her that I loved her. Oh! it was all so sudden and mysterious like, that I think, sir, if you had been in my place you would yourself have been puzzled to know what to do. But it happened that I was delayed in Berne, sir, and that she came there, on her way to Paris. There I told her of my love, and, sir — she — well, sir, I believe she listened."

Mr. Harrelston was very uneasy, but he had courted this ordeal, and must now go through it.

"And now we come to the time when I was a fool. I had no sooner told her that I loved her than I decided that it was my duty to live for my people — my poor, despised, down-trodden Indians — to be of them, to live with them, and neither to love nor to marry outside my own race. This conviction preyed on me so that I gave everything up to it, surrendered my heart — my soul — my love — my future!"

"Dreamer! enthusiast!" murmured Mr. Harrelston in his native German, which he always used when strongly excited. But his voice was so low that Pleasant did not hear him.

"I was a brute — a fool! I did not know — as I know now — that love is worth more than everything else in the world; worth more than race, or country, or home, or friends; often stronger than duty. I did not know how I should suffer in the next miserable ten days after I had made my resolve; nor what trouble I was bringing on — on Alice. Oh, tell me what I can do! what punishment I can bring to bear on myself! what — when I can see *her*?"

He sprang up, and began pacing the floor. Mr. Harrelston sank down into his chair, and mopped his flushed brow vigorously with his handkerchief.

"Not a word more, my boy — not now, while you are so — so excitable. I have heard enough to convince me that I have not much with which to reproach you. I hope you don't think it is without misgivings that I have — have spoken to you about these delirious confessions of my poor child — or that I would have summoned you here unless I had felt it absolutely necessary. You say you have been a fool. Mr. Merrinott, that is a harsh word — and after you have really been a fool two or three times you will not be so anxious to acknowledge it. But you have acted in a most — most ——" Mr. Harrelston indulged in another imaginary immolation of another imaginary fly with his ruler. "Well, never mind that. This is what I propose. I appeal to you, without making any promises for the future, or any criticisms on the past, to help me save my child. She was a little better to-day; it is only at night that the delirium sets in. The fever is soon to turn. Now, I have reason to think that if Alice knows that you have come to Paris, have been at our house, have — have ceased being — as you call yourself — a fool, it will save her from further danger; and if she is to recover — will greatly aid her recovery. I am sure I cannot say more."

"I will do anything — everything that you wish," cried Pleasant, so loudly that the banker placed his finger on his lips, and pointed in the direction of the next room. "Only let me see her once more, and beg her pardon, and tell her how I regret my folly, and how I will try to atone for it!"

"Let the future take care of itself," said Mr. Harrelston. He did not like to think too much of it, and of Pleasant's new relations to Alice. His whole attention was concentrated on saving his child; after that was done the rest could be thought of.

"I shall not sleep until I have seen Alice," said the Indian.

"We shall see what to-morrow can do for her," said the banker. "When she is quiet and in her perfect mind in the morning, I mean to tell her that you have come; that you have been unavoidably kept in Switzerland. I mean to explain away the fact——"

"That I have been a fool."

"And then — why, then, let love and nature do the rest. Come back here at five, Mr. Merrinott; my carriage will be here, and we will drive to my house and dine together. It will be better so. I will not disguise from you the fact that Mrs. Harrelston is inclined to be angry with you, and so I must take you home with me this first time and explain what I mean to do. As for seeing Alice, that will be out of the question for you until she is much better."

Pleasant wrung Mr. Harrelston's hand and went away, promising to return exactly at the appointed hour. After Mr. Harrelston had seen him out of the office he sat alone for a few minutes before he called his secretaries back.

"They say the course of true love never does run smooth," mused the banker, "but it runs with swiftness. Why, all these things have happened in a few weeks. Well, the Indian is honest — and — and——" He rang the bell for his men, and they came back to be so pressed by him for an hour that letters lay scattered around them like leaves about a tree over which an autumn wind had passed.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AN ALLIANCE FOR INFORMATION.

"It's thoroughly vexatious, Miss Merlin, that's what it is!" said Colonel Cliff, bringing his gloved hand down with considerable force upon the pile of music sheets before which he was standing. "It annoys me more than I can tell you, and I know there is not the slightest use in trying to conceal my annoyance."

"*Souvent femme varie*," sang Caro, sweetly, looking at the piano keys. She knew that the Colonel would instantly cease the confession of his feelings if she offered him any advice just then.

"The servants are as mysterious, and the house is as inaccessible to me as if I were a complete stranger to the Harrelstons. All I can learn is that Alice is somewhat better, but the old dragon that guards the hall door always finds some excuse for not letting me in, and I am sure that she has carefully concealed my cards — and — and — the flowers that I have sent." The Colonel bit his moustache, coloured a little, drummed on the music sheets, and continued, "Yet the Indian goes there every day; — he is received, and makes himself very much at home, I suppose."

Caro looked up with real surprise on her face. "Mr. Merrinott goes there? Are you sure?"

"I wish I were not," said the Colonel, ruefully. "I can't imagine what I have done that I should be excluded when he is received. It cannot be possible that I have unwittingly offended Mrs. Harrelston. Can it? Can you tell me?"

"Oh no! I think that is quite out of the question."

"Well, I don't know what to think. I went to the hotel where the Indian was supposed to be staying, but he had gone from there without leaving his address. I went to the bank half a dozen times, but Mr. Harrelston was never in. And so, do you know, Miss Merlin, I came to see if I can get you to find out for me what it all means. Will you not see them — see Alice and her mother — and discover why I am forbidden the gates? I am tired of feeling as — as Adam did after he was turned out of Paradise. I want to get back as soon as I can."

Caro left the piano and sat down in the old arm-chair. She was thinking how odd it was that the Colonel should have come to ask her a favour just at the time when she needed his service.

"Do sit down, Colonel Cliff," she said, with a smile. "You look nervous, standing there as if you were on guard."

"I *feel* nervous."

"And I am sure that you are worrying yourself in vain. There can be no reason why you should not be received by the Harrelstons, if they were receiving any one. Do you not think that you are mistaken about the Indian?"

"Not at all. His coppery face is seen at the Harrelstons' every day."

"But how do you know that?"

"Well," said the Colonel, after a moment's pause, "if you must know, I watched, and I found it out for myself!"

Caro laughed merrily. "Oh, Colonel, Colonel! It is time you had a feminine ally. Your case is indeed desperate! And what shall I say to our gentle Alice, if I succeed in seeing her? I will venture to assert one thing, and that is that she has not seen Mr. Merrinott's coppery face yet. I think Mrs. Harrelston would take good care of that."

"Oh yes, she has seen him; I am sure she has!" said the Colonel, uneasily. "And what she finds to admire in that unkempt son of the forest I cannot see. His little peep at civilized society does not seem to have communicated the smallest polish to his manners. But you will see them? You will find out all about it, will you not?"

"I will tell you my impressions after I have seen Alice and her mother," said Caro. "What shall I say to Alice?"

"Say — say how distressed I have been at the thought of her illness, and — and — you needn't tell her, Miss Caro, that I adore her, for I suspect she has found that out by this time. And that must be the reason why she so carefully avoids seeing me."

"I think you misjudge Alice. She is too frank — too kind to — to avoid any one or to allow any misunderstanding. And I believe, Colonel," she added, with a faint gleam of mischief in her great blue eyes, "that you exaggerate the importance of Mr. Pleasant Merrinott's visits to the garden of Eden from which you are just now shut out. Ma has chosen this afternoon for a calling expedition, and we will manage to see the Harrelstons before we come home. So to-morrow morning I shall have something to tell you. Come early, for Mélari and — and Stanislas are both coming at eleven, and you know I must not lose a moment of their training and advice. And now, Colonel, I want to ask you to promise me something."

The gallant Colonel held up his right hand. "I

promise," he said, looking down with a kindly smile at the slight, pale girl shrinking into the depths of the arm-chair. "What is it? Shall I cut off my head? Shall I beard Mapleson or Gye for you? Shall I ask Gounod to write you a new opera? Command me."

"Colonel," said Caro, in a husky voice, and looking away from him, and up at the great curtain drawn across the capacious window, "do you remember speaking, when you were here some eight or nine days ago, just after your return from Spain, about the sister of Mr. Stanislas? You do. Now, what did you mean? No; that is not what I wish to ask. Did you ever hear anything to prove that the lady is *not* his sister? And if you know, no matter what, to prove that she is *not* his sister, I want you to tell me, because — I — have — very grave reasons for wishing to know."

The Colonel was troubled. He retreated from his entrenchments behind the pile of music, and sat down.

"I don't know exactly how to answer that, Miss Merlin," he said.

"Ah! then there *is* a doubt," said the girl, fiercely.

There was a revelation in her tone. Colonel Cliff understood the situation at once, and deeply regretted that the subject had been introduced.

"The lady has arrived in town, I believe," he said.

"Yes, she has," said Caro. "And she called here yesterday. Oh, we had quite a visit. She is very enthusiastic. Are all women of her race as much in earnest as she seems to be?"

"In earnest?" queried the Colonel; "what was she earnest about?"

"Oh, grand human ideas and — and things. She doesn't seem to care at all for art and music. I suppose they are not earnest enough for her. Ma says she thinks she'd make a good revolutionist!"

"Ah!" cried the Colonel, jumping up and beginning to pace to and fro; "your mother has hit it, as usual. Trust her to get at the truth, every time."

"What do you mean, Colonel?" said Caro, over whose face an expression of fear and doubt was slowly stealing. Finding that he did not answer at once, she arose and came toward him. "Colonel Cliff!" she cried, "you know something about that woman that you are not willing to tell me! Now, listen! I must know it! No matter how dreadful it may be, you may tell me. I have a right to know whether ——"

"My dear Miss Merlin!" said the Colonel, "I assure you that all that I know about the lady is not so very alarming as you imagine."

"Well, what *is* it! Why *don't* you tell me?"

Caro stamped one foot, although she was determined to be calm. The Colonel began to believe that if he desired to retain the influential co-operation of Miss Caro, in his endeavours to find his way back to the Harrelstons', he must forthwith tell what he knew about Vera.

"It is simply this: I have found out, but I cannot tell you, and you must not ask me how — that this interesting young Vera is one of the leading spirits in the great Nihilist conspiracy."

"Nihilist! What's that? How strange!" said Caro, all in one breath.

"Nihilists are eccentric people who wish to destroy society and governments because they think them hopelessly corrupt, and who take very radical means to accomplish their wishes," said the Colonel.

Caro felt as if a load had been lifted from her heart. Her first thought — full of charity for the beloved Stanislas — was that he was annoyed and embarrassed by the eccentricities of his sister, and that for that reason he had not mentioned her relationship to him until he was

compelled to do so. She retired into the armchair once more.

"Oh! is that all?" she said, toying with the ribbon at her neck. "And if I see Alice to-day am I at liberty to tell her this about — about Mademoiselle Vera? Because I — I am afraid that we were in some doubt ——. She *must* be the sister of the musician, must she not?"

"Well," answered the Colonel, "speaking frankly, I am bound to say that I do not think she is — that, in fact, I am convinced that she is not."

"And who has led you to form this opinion?"

The Colonel was on the point of replying to this — so Caro thought — with a person's name; but he reflected, and presently he said —

"I must ask you to excuse me from telling you that."

"What mystery! Colonel, do you think Mademoiselle Vera is an improper person for me — for us — to know?"

"No, I do not. I think that, aside from her political vagaries, she is a very worthy young woman."

"But what can Mr. Stanislas — what interest —— Is he — a conspirator — too?"

"Now we have come to the point where I am entirely puzzled," said the Colonel, and he told the exact truth. His sudden discovery of Caro's adoration for the musician had sealed his lips for many things which he had at first thought of mentioning to her. "Perhaps," he added, "it will be well not to speak to any one else of this conversation for a day or two. I suppose it would interest you to know exactly who and what Mademoiselle Vera is — if I should happen to find out."

"I should be glad to know all that is proper for me to know," said the girl; but the Colonel remarked that the keenness of her interest appeared to have vanished.

Caro had jumped at a conclusion which set her mind at rest, and which substituted a kind of compassion for

Vera for the fierce jealousy which she had at first felt. Vera was a conspirator, and Stanislas, her countryman, and perhaps secretly a sympathizer, was shielding the woman's plans beneath the goodly ægis of his renowned name. But was he not in danger in so doing? Why need he mar his brilliant future by meddling with conspiracy? Or no — it was delicious to be beloved by one who was bold enough to conspire — humane enough to aid those who conspired. She would not doubt him.

"Yes, Colonel, you are right:" she said, "we must not speak of these things to any one else. Above all, not to ma. Ma wouldn't understand them, and you know that she is imprudent as ——"

Caro's voice sank into a whisper, for at that moment Mrs. Merlin's worn face appeared at the top of the winding stairs, and her thin, sharp voice said —

"What is it that your ma wouldn't understand, daughter? Colonel, I'm always glad to see you here, for I know you can give Caro some good advice. She needs it, I can tell you."

"She needs it less, Mrs. Merlin, than most young ladies whom I have the honour of knowing."

"Wal, I dunno," said the old lady, settling back into a chair and untying her bonnet-strings; "I dunno. Sence she's undertook to make her debew this fall, seems to me she don't think any one can tell her anything."

"So you have found an occasion for making your *début*, Miss Merlin? And so soon! Allow me to congratulate you most heartily. And how and when is it to be? In an opera, a concert, a church festival, or ——"

He held out both hands to Caro, who smiled and took them for a moment, then dropped them, and turned away with a sigh so doleful that her mother looked at her with a pained expression, and the Colonel could scarcely conceal his surprise.

"Are you not glad that the moment of triumph is approaching?" he said. "I am sure it will be a great success. Mélari says so; Stanislas says so; and even your rivals say so. We will all do our best to make the occasion as brilliant as possible. I pledge myself to make every young woman who is envious of you take tickets."

"In that case," said Mrs. Merlin, "the hull house 'll be full. There's about seventeen dozen young creatures from all parts of America jest literally burstin' with envy sence Stanislas prophesied that Caro would make her fortune on the stage. I should feel perfectly comfortable about her chances, Colonel, if she didn't give way to such dretful fits of discouragement." And the good soul, hearing the servant below discussing in an angry tone of voice with some intruder in the garden, went down to impose her authority.

"Oh, Colonel Cliff," said Caro, "it would cut me to the heart to disappoint you all; but I have a presentiment of failure. I cannot describe it to you; it is terrible. I accepted this opportunity for a *début* that has been offered through the kindness of Mélari and — and Mr. Stanislas, just out of sheer determination not to be frightened by these dismal forebodings. It is a concert to be given at the Italiens, on the first of November. La Vange has consented to reappear on that occasion, after an absence of fifteen years from the stage, and she will be greeted, out of respect for her career, by the most refined and critical audience that can be assembled in Paris. Mélari says that the success of a *débutante* before such an audience would be a passport to immediate celebrity — those were his words. Well, that is not the best of it. Mapleson has, it seems, promised to attend this concert, and when he heard that I was to sing there, he said to Stanislas, 'If she is a success there, I will, after all that you and others have said of her, give her an engagement,

and she shall make her first appearance in opera in London in the first week of the spring season.' Oh, Colonel, when I think what joy it would be for me to sing Margherita in 'Faust' at the Grand Opera in London, my head turns around, and I say, 'I will not fail at this coming concert! I will make the Parisians like me!' But then the terrible presentiment returns — a kind of feeling that my failure will be due to some cause beyond my control — and I tremble."

"No; you will not fail," said the Colonel, looking down admiringly at Caro's enthusiastic face, lit up by the brilliant blue eyes. "Beware of the demon of overwork, Miss Caro; he is inflicting all this misery on you just now. Beware of worries, even" — he lowered his voice — "even about the mysterious Mademoiselle Vera — and you will come out of your trial triumphantly."

"Perhaps so," said Caro, with another sigh; "but still I tremble."

"You have the vocation, Miss Merlin. You will win. But I must confess that it is a strange lottery in which our American girls risk their chances for a prize, and that the blanks are wonderfully numerous."

"Yes," said the girl, mournfully, "I know of a dozen failures within the range of our acquaintance in the last eighteen months. Trust me for one thing, Colonel Cliff! If I fail, you will see me take the road for seclusion in Illinois at once. I shall shudder at the thought of going through a series of failures in Paris and London, and then rushing off to appear in some cheap theatre in a provincial town in Italy, and to pay the local papers to publish long bombastic accounts of my 'splendid promise,' and my 'perfect accent,' and my 'impassioned acting,' as Lottie Eldredge did a year ago."

"Poor things!" said the Colonel, with a smile. "When they do get the craze it seems impossible for them to

recover. I knew a case not long ago of a young American lady who was announced as about to make her *début* for a third time, under a new trademark — I beg your pardon, I mean under a new name. Her real name was Scolley when she reached Paris from the United States. When she hoped to make her success here she became Mademoiselle Scolet. When she failed here she went to Milan, and, thanks to her father's ducats, had a chance to fail there under the name of Signora Scollini. And now she is announced as Signorina Scolletini, from the theatre in Bari, with an immense voice and a still greater reputation, and she is soon going home to rob the world of rest!"

"Colonel, you set my teeth on edge," said the girl. "Tell me no more, or I will give up my prospect of an appearance at La Vange's concert."

"The failures are absurd enough," said the Colonel, "and certainly they make the judicious grieve. But then look at the successes! Look at that conscientious, hard-working girl, almost superhuman in her powers of concentration upon her coveted object — Miss Griswold, who has just come off with the first honours at the Conservatoire here, and who will certainly be engaged at the Grand Opera. There is national glory enough for us in her triumph to make us forget the multitudes of ridiculous failures made by American girls every year. She had the vocation; you have it; and you will succeed — as she did — because you deserve success. Personally, you know," and here the good Colonel took on what his friends called "his English air" — that being an affectation of a certain dense indifference to things in general — "personally, I consider music as a trivial branch of the art of expression."

Caro's eyes blazed now with fires of contradiction. The Colonel had effected his object. He wished to stir her pride, besides which he well knew that at that

particular moment those two lovely twin qualities — her courage and her enthusiasm — were slumbering. "When those are well aroused, she will not fail!" reasoned the good Colonel, and he went on —

"As a trivial branch of the art of expression." This was highly vague; yet he thought it would do. "But when I look about me and see that Saint Cecilia's chief ministrants before the most renowned of her European shrines are American women, it wakes up my pride. Think of Griswold at the Academie Nationale de Musique, and delightful Mignon Van Landt at the Opera Comique in Paris, and the polished Kellogg — ah! a great singer, and good as great! — throwing the Russians into ecstasies with her delicious voice at the Petersburg Opera? And then think of Miss Thursby, who has got laurel wreaths from every European capital, and whose voice makes Mozart rustle in his tomb with joy; and Mrs. Osgood in London, who chants a madrigal so that it makes your heart ache with bliss; and — and I might name many others. Those, Miss Merlin — those are the successes! Think of them, and say to yourself — I shall be among them, and you cannot fail."

"If you say another word about all those fortunate women," said Caro, "I shall be envious. How grand it would be to succeed — to live like them, to be like them!"

"You can — you will. And now I must go. Do not forget my cause this afternoon, Miss Merlin, and tell me good news to-morrow, or I shall despair. Good-bye until morning!" And he seemed to melt out of the room; at least, Caro thought he did, because before he went downstairs she had fallen into a reverie which completely shut her out from the surrounding world.

The presentiment, meantime, lay heavily on her heart.

CHAPTER XXV.

CONVALESCENCE.

ALICE awoke one morning at dawn, and seeing her mother standing patiently at her bedside, stretched out one thin white hand and laid it gently on the good lady's arm. Mrs. Harrelston started and looked at her daughter anxiously.

"I feel, *petite maman*," said the girl, faintly, "as if I were beginning to live again."

Mrs. Harrelston's tears testified to the joy which this assurance brought her. She knelt down beside Alice.

"You must be quiet, daughter," she said. "You have been very ill; and now that you are beginning to recover, any excitement might be dangerous. Sleep some more; it is only six o'clock."

"Six o'clock morning, or evening, mamma?"

"Morning, child," answered Mrs. Harrelston, with a tremor in her voice. "Oh dear, she is wandering again."

"No, mamma," said Alice; "I know what I am saying, but I seem to have lost some days out of my life. Do you know I woke up in the middle of the night, and it seemed to me as if I had come back from a long journey. Everything is new, and strange, and — and delicious. Only my — head is so heavy ——" And she sighed. Presently

she added, "I am glad it is morning. Is it a fine day? I thought I heard the sparrows chirp a little while ago."

"Chirp, dear! They chatter! Do they make your poor head ache? Shall I draw the bed-curtains?"

"Oh no, mamma, please don't do that. I feel as if I wanted light, and air, and flowers, and——" She tried to raise her head, but in vain.

Mrs. Harrelston, with many gentle reproaches, rearranged the pillows, and remained kneeling, so that she could comfort herself with the spectacle of her child's slow but certain return to perfect consciousness and sanity. She was obliged, somewhat against her will, to admit that her husband's experiment, odd and improper as it had seemed to her maternal mind when he had undertaken it, more than a week ago, was a success. From the moment that Alice had been told of the arrival in Paris of Pleasant Merrinott, and that he had called and inquired for her, the fits of feverish delirium had become less frequent, and had finally ceased altogether. But they were succeeded by a deep and overwhelming prostration, at which the girl's parents had been almost as gravely alarmed as by the delirious symptoms, until the family physician had informed them that the fever had run its course, and the girl was certain to rally. The banker was radiant with delight as he observed the improvement in Alice's condition. Every morning, before he got into his *coupé* to drive down to the bank, he came timidly to the door of the sick-room, and, being led by his wife into his daughter's presence, kissed her pale brow tenderly, and talked in a low voice for a few moments. Mrs. Harrelston observed that he never failed to mention the young Indian's name. The shrewd father knew the cordial that gave the girl life, and was an excellent judge of the doses in which it was to be administered.

"You are laying up trouble for us in future Eric,"

said his wife one morning, as she accompanied him to the garden gate. "Would you like to have our daughter Alice marry an Indian?"

"I want my daughter Alice to live," he had answered gently, whisking into the carriage, and telling the coachman to drive on, as if he were anxious to avoid discussion on the subject.

The truth was that he was trying to invent some plan by which he could turn Alice's attention away from the youthful Cherokee, but thus far he had cudgelled his brains in vain.

Pleasant came and went with a penitent, stricken air, which was very impressive; it was not difficult to see that his self-surrender to Alice was now complete, and that he was torn with remorse for the heedless and selfish manner in which he had separated himself from her after his declaration to her of his love. When Mr. Harrelston looked at the dark face, with its proud and fierce expression, he was no little perplexed to know how he should deal with this youth who had pushed his way into the family as if he meant to claim a permanent connection there, and whose excessive frankness disarmed all antagonism to his wishes.

"If there were anything mean in his composition," thought Mr. Harrelston, "I should know how to send him to the right-about in a minute; but, confound him, there isn't!"

Mrs. Harrelston had her own peculiar plan — most mothers have one — and she carefully refrained from telling her husband what it was, because she feared that he might spoil it. She did not intend that Mr. Pleasant Merrinott should marry her daughter until she had exhausted every means for preventing an alliance upon which she thought she could look only with distaste and repugnance. Yet when she reflected, from time to time, on the singular

intensity and passionate earnestness of her daughter's nature, she felt that to undertake the direct thwarting of Alice's wishes — the fulfilment of her affections — would be a responsibility from which she would be inclined to shrink, even were it at the expense of humbling her pride.

"Morning you said, mamma, did you not?" said Alice, who seemed determined to talk. "Oh! how I long to be well enough to be out of doors! The Bois must be lovely, now. It is almost October, isn't it? Have the leaves turned yet? When can I sit up? Can I not look out of the window?"

"It is quite October, dear — the third day, even, and the leaves are all russet, and the nights and mornings are very cold. I am afraid you cannot go out, dear child, for a long time to come."

"I shall ask the doctor to-day."

"Alice, you frighten me! You must not talk now, but try to sleep."

"No, mamma; I have slept too much. Last night I dreamed that I was back in Meiringen, and it seemed so real that when I awoke just now I looked for the old blue bed-curtains of the Reichenbach Hotel. I thought I was still there. Isn't it absurd? And do you know that most of the time since I have been ill I have fancied that I was in Meiringen? I could have insisted on it. The two walls of the room were like two great mountain ranges, and I could see the drifting of the clouds, and the shadows on the rocks, and I could feel the spray on my brow from the brook. And oh, mamma, one night I dreamed that the Alpbach swelled to a terrible torrent while I was crossing it, and that I should have been washed away and drowned if I had not been saved by Mr. Merrinott. He dashed into the water after me, and — and then I could remember nothing else. Wasn't it a strange dream? And it was so frightfully lifelike ——"

"Oh! daughter, daughter Alice," said Mrs. Harrelston, rising from her knees, "you *must* lie still and try to sleep. The doctor will scold me when he finds you wide awake and excited."

"I am not excited now, dear," said the girl. "I feel very calm; I shall be all right in a few days." She looked up at her mother with a faint smile which seemed like a promise of recovery. Some of Alice's old vivacity was evidently struggling to find its way back into her white and wearied face. The mother bent down to kiss the girl, and found Alice's hands clasped tightly over her own. "And then I dreamed — mamma, you know how foolish dreams are; they never seem to have any common sense or coherence — that it was not I, but Mr. Merrinott, who was in danger of being carried off by the flood. I saw him washed down into a dreadful boiling sea, and then he vanished. But, as he disappeared, he cried out, 'I shall come back again.' Was that not strange? What do you think it means?"

"It means, my lady," said Mrs. Harrelston, "that you have had a narrow escape from being swept away on a flood much like that which you dreamed of, but that God has kept you for us, and that unless you wish to break our hearts, you will not keep on talking, and so run the risk of falling ill again. Alice, will you not listen to me? Alice! What will the doctor say?"

Mrs. Harrelston spoke almost sharply, for the girl had thrown her arms about her mother's neck with a quick, feverish movement quite unexpected from one in the early stages of recovery from an exhausting fever, and so had raised herself into a sitting posture.

"Prop me up with the pillows, mamma," she said. "I want to sit so for a little while. I am sure that getting well requires nothing now but an effort of the will, and I am going to make it."

Mrs. Harrelston slowly extricated herself from the girl's embrace, and arranged the pillows. "If you will not obey *me*, Alice," she said, "I suppose I must obey you."

"Tell me one thing, mamma," said the girl with sudden earnestness, and with a pained expression, as if at the revival of a sad memory or an anxiety; "tell me one thing, and I will do as you wish at once."

"What is it, Alice?"

"You know that papa told me the other day — that Mr. Merrinott had been here — that he is in Paris. Was that — have you seen him, mamma? Or was papa trying to ——" She paused with a perplexed look on her face. A moment afterwards she said, "I thought perhaps papa was trying to make me think that he had come back — and was staying here, when he was elsewhere — for you know he is such a wild and strange young man; and when he disappeared in Switzerland — I mean when he did not come here ——"

"Did you expect him to come to Paris, then?" queried Mrs. Harrelston, almost forgetting her daughter's illness in her eagerness to learn anything new concerning Alice's relations to the Indian.

"Yes, mamma, I think I did," answered the girl, lowering her eyes, and sinking back upon the pillows. "Don't you know, you said in Switzerland — that it was not necessary to invite him to call on us in Paris — but ——"

"And it proved entirely unnecessary, for he certainly called without my invitation."

"Then papa told me the truth?" said Alice, almost joyously. "How could I have fancied that he did not? I must have mixed my dream and the reality ——"

"Alice, you are feverish again. You must lie down at once."

"Very well, mamma." And she obeyed, hiding her sweet face, into which new health and life seemed every moment stealing, among the pillows. But she did not go to sleep. She closed her eyes, and thought about Pleasant Merrinott. And by-and-by, when watchful Mrs. Harrelston, deceived by her regular breathing, fancied that she was slumbering, and left the room for a few minutes, she murmured Pleasant's name.

* * * * * *

Had Alice realized how near she had gone to the gates of death, she might have come back from them with more difficulty. But youth and love escorted her on the upward journey, and she was soon well enough to receive the doctor's permission to leave her chamber. She passed from stage to stage of convalescence with eagerness; and one lovely October morning, ten days after the banker had begun his experiment by telling her that Pleasant Merrinott was in Paris and had asked to see her, she was escorted by her father and mother into the library on the ground floor of the villa, and was informed that she might sit for half an hour at the window opening upon the porch. It was ten o'clock; the warm sunshine seemed coining gold out of the tawny leaves on the trees in the garden; and a faint aroma of resinous woods came from the alleys of the Bois de Boulogne, along the skirt of which ran the avenue on which the Harrelstons lived. The banker bade his daughter good-bye, and trundled away to his daily slavery; and Alice, warmly wrapped up, reclining in a cosy arm-chair, was keenly enjoying the communion with out-of-doors nature which her illness had so long interrupted, when her eyes fell on a huge bouquet, placed in a Japanese vase on a pedestal among the bronzes near a writing-desk. Bertine, the maid, who stood near Alice, at once understood the question indicated by the delicate arching of Miss Harrelston's eyebrows.

"It is the seventh one, Mademoiselle," she said. "Poor, dear man! What pains he has given himself to inquire after Mademoiselle! And a new bouquet every day or two! We were obliged to hide them, and to let him think that they were in Mademoiselle's chamber, although Madame your mother would not allow any flowers in the upper rooms while Mademoiselle had the fever."

Alice laughed merrily. "Seven bouquets, Bertine!" she said. "Did the savage really bring as many as that?"

"The savage, Mademoiselle? Oh no! It was of Colonel Cliff that I was speaking."

Alice grew grave.

"Colonel Cliff? Has he returned from Spain? Then the bouquets are all from him."

"All but three or four, which came from friends when Mademoiselle was first taken ill. And except one — an odd little one — from the Russian lady whom we saw in Berne."

"Indeed! Has she been here?"

"No, Mademoiselle. It was brought by a very old man, a Jew — with a long coat on — ah! a dirty and greasy coat! an old man with a face all covered with scars, and with a gray curl in front of each ear. The flowers were cheap, but they were pretty. As they withered quickly, Madame your mother made me throw them away."

"And the savage brought no flowers, Bertine? Are you quite sure?"

"I do not think he brought any, Mademoiselle, but I will inquire," said the maid, respectfully, turning away to hide the smile at her lips. As she was opening the door leading into the hall, she caught a glimpse of a tall figure at the garden gate. "There he is now, Mademoiselle," she said, and disappeared.

Now the garden gate happened to be ajar, and the result was that before Alice had found courage to take a

good look at the visitor announced by Bertine, that visitor stood on the porch before her, at the open window. Although he thought she looked down, she saw him. He had been walking rapidly, and his eyes were sparkling with excitement. He took off his hat and threw his long black hair back from his brow nervously. Alice instinctively felt that he had been brave enough to say whatever he pleased until he had reached the window, and that there and then his courage had ebbed away. The faint flush came into her cheeks as she raised her head, and said—

"Oh, it is Mr. Merrinott! I thought you were already on your way to the Indian Nation, for we have heard nothing of you." Then the vision of the snow-clad Alpine range arose before her, and she seemed to hear the roaring of the river Aar, and the sound of the young Cherokee's voice saying, over and over again, "Forgive me, Alice, and love me!" She lost her momentary self-possession, and gazed at the embroidered ottoman at her feet.

"Miss Harrelston," said Pleasant, in a tremulous but clear voice, "I have been a fool — a reckless, inconsiderate, headstrong fellow. I was guilty of a great discourtesy in rushing away from you like I did that — that night — at Berne. But I have tried to atone for my folly ever since I became convinced of it. And I have come to ask you to forgive me. Oh! Miss Harrelston — if you could know how I have suffered!"

Despite the incoherence of the explanation, Alice understood it perfectly. "If there is anything to forgive, please consider it forgiven, Mr. Merrinott," she said, very sweetly, yet with a certain dignity which seemed to establish an unpleasantly wide distance between them. Pleasant felt as if he had failed in his effort to re-enter Paradise, and he was cold at the heart for a minute. "I think we rather expect you to be original," the girl added, readily perceiving that he was abashed, and not sorry to

find him a bit humble. "Will you walk in by the front door, or will you sit down on that little seat in the warm sunshine? I suppose you know that I have been very ill? And what have you been doing in Paris — since your arrival?"

"I have been waiting for you to recover, and trembling at the thought that I might never see you again," answered the young Indian, drawing a rustic bench toward the French window, and sitting down so that he was directly opposite Alice.

"And have you been at work on your mission? Or have you forgotten about the poor Cherokees, and am I to win my wager, after all?"

"The Cherokees, Miss Harrelston, have been giving a good account of themselves. I am glad to say that they have driven out some of the white intruders, and that they — well, I reckon they punished them right severely. But why talk of them? Oh, Miss Harrelston, tell me that you have forgiven me — and that you have not forgotten — that you are not angry with me."

Alice was puzzled. As she was, of course, quite unconscious that in her delirium she had betrayed the secret of her heart to her parents, and that her father had in his anxiety communicated it to Pleasant, she could scarcely understand why he was so penitent. She thought it might be well not to be profuse in her expressions of forgiveness.

"I have been here every day," continued Pleasant, ruefully. "Your father has been good to me, and has told me every morning how you were getting on."

He did not tell her that he had stood all one night in the shadow of the garden wall, suffering incalculable anguish because Mr. Harrelston, in a moment of dread, had told him that he was "afraid Alice would not live to see another dawn."

"You were very kind to think of me," she said, and

the eloquence of love stole into her tones although she strove hard to conceal it.

"Think of you! How could I help it!" said Pleasant, simply. He looked carefully around the handsome library, with its rich carpets, its fragment of ancient tapestry behind a carven bookcase, its ivory images ranged on glittering shelves, and its costly bronzes; and presently his eyes fell on the flowers. "That is a beautiful bouquet yonder," he said.

"Yes," said Alice, glancing swiftly at him, while a dimple of mischief appeared in her cheeks, and her eyes sparkled. "It is from Colonel Cliff. May I ask you to step in and hand it to me? I have not yet had the pleasure of examining it."

Pleasant put on his most ugly frown, arose and went around to the hall door, and entering the library, caught up the mass of flowers, regardless of the water that dripped on the carpet.

"Oh no, no! You must bring the vase also!" cried Alice; and while he was doing this, rather clumsily, Alice examined him critically. He was smarter in his dress; it was evident that Paris had already begun her work of polishing him. But there was a look of perplexity and annoyance on his handsome face which displeased her. It seemed to detract from his nobility of expression.

When Colonel Cliff arrived ten minutes later, and was ushered into the library by Mrs. Harrelston, who had met him in the hall, he was disagreeably surprised to find Pleasant seated almost at the feet of Alice, and picking to pieces the Colonel's latest bouquet. Mrs. Harrelston was shocked, and expected to see Pleasant at once retire to a corner; but he did not. He rose, made his formal Southern Academy bow, and sat down again without retreating an inch.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE WARNING.

It did not take Miss Harrelston long to discover that Colonel Cliff was profoundly annoyed at finding Pleasant sitting at her feet, and that the gallant gentleman endeavoured to conceal his annoyance by talking like an angel. In conversation Colonel Cliff clearly had Pleasant at a disadvantage. The Cherokee was especially infelicitous in that small talk which passes current in society for so much more than it is worth; and his quaintness and originality were frequently mistaken by ladies who were accustomed to more ceremonious and cautious address for downright rudeness or ignorance. Pleasant had, however, a singularly fascinating way of redeeming himself, after an apparently careless lapse, by a flash of wit, or an odd reminiscence of his life in the Nation, which even the most exacting dames accepted as adequate compensation for his minor defects.

Colonel Cliff, "brought up" in the best of society, and in a punctilious family where etiquette was considered as necessary as probity, never made mistakes, was always at ease, and readily saw that Pleasant would have given his eyes to possess the same repose and polish of manner. On a prairie, or in a forest, Pleasant would have appeared infinitely superior to the ex-officer, but in a drawing-room Colonel Cliff, in his faultless morn-

ing costume, his stainless gloves, and creaseless shoes, and with his slightly formal and military carriage, was the more correct of the two. He held Pleasant at a distance. Disdaining to allude to his unlucky bouquet, which the Cherokee coolly went on dissecting, he talked to the ladies of Spain, of Caro and her new enterprise (adroitly managing to discover that Caro's mission to the Harrelston mansion in his behalf had not been in vain), of the best means of encouraging convalescence, of the glories of the autumn weather, of the sojourn in Switzerland, and all in such agreeable vein, and with such art in flying from one subject to another, that Pleasant could not put in a word.

The Indian began to feel discomfited, and the scowl on his brow deepened as he observed that Mrs. Harrelston was enjoying his discomfiture. Just as he had decided to break into the conversation, at all hazards, the Colonel turned to him, in the most natural manner in the world, and with a winning smile, said —

"And what news from the Nation, Mr. Merrinott? When does the extermination of the wicked Bluelots begin?"

Alice started, and looked reproachfully at Pleasant, as if she half suspected him of an inclination to break the promise which he had made to her on the hill in the Brunig Pass. Pleasant arose so abruptly that Colonel Cliff started back; then brushing some leaves and the petals of some massacred roses from his garments, he answered, slowly —

"The Cherokees, sir, are making right smart progress. They have undertaken to do the work that the United States soldiers were not enterprising enough to accomplish; they have attacked the white invaders and driven them back; not, I reckon, sir," he added, a little proudly, "without doing them some damage."

"Now you must not speak ill of the soldiers, Mr.

Merrinott," said the Colonel, rising in his turn, as if he disliked to sit under the shadow of the Indian. "Remember, if you please, that they have done many a good deed for your race."

"My memory, sir, is excellent," said Pleasant, whose voice was getting deeper.

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Harrelston; "there go the gentlemen into politics. I must remind you not to talk of exciting topics before Alice, or I shall carry her off to her chamber, and you will see her no more until she is quite well."

"I like it, mamma," said Alice, with a gleam of fun in her eyes. "Mr. Merrinott is so terribly in earnest when he talks about his Nation!"

"I must beg your pardon, ladies," said the Colonel, "but my interest in Mr. Merrinott's Nation is quite as sincere as his own ——"

Pleasant looked up at Colonel Cliff with a scornful flash out of his great lustrous eyes.

"And some of the happiest days of my life were passed in that enchanted Territory. I often see dancing before my eyes vivid pictures of its flower-spangled fields, and its forests filled with thousands of chattering birds, and its great natural parks, and its delicious twilights. And I always feel a genuine interest in learning how the Indians are succeeding in keeping it in their possession."

"Is it so lovely, then?" said Alice.

"It is one of the garden spots of the world; a kind of earthly paradise, not yet marred by the ugly practical improvements of the civilization of the United States. Personally, I hope the Indians will keep all intruders out of it, but I am afraid I must admit that I don't believe they will."

"Oh, they must," said Alice; "they cannot do otherwise, if they are all as enthusiastic as Mr. Merrinott."

"Enthusiasm is a fine quality," remarked the Colonel, thoughtfully; "but I cannot see that it does much toward freeing nations or keeping them from invasion and destruction. No class of people, I should think, is more enthusiastic than revolutionists; but see how little they effect in these latter days. Take the case of Russia, for instance. There are the Russian conspirators ——"

"Really, Colonel Cliff," said Mrs. Harrelston, "I must exercise my authority rather more sternly. You may talk about flowers and music and sunshine while Alice is here, but not of politics and conspiracies."

The Colonel had given Pleasant a most significant look when he spoke of Russian conspiracies, and it had not been lost upon the Indian.

"Madam, I deserve to be banished," said the Colonel. "I don't know what brought the topic of revolution into my head, unless it was that I had heard from a diplomatic friend, the other evening at a party, that the French Government has been requested to keep its eyes closely on the movements of a party of Russian conspirators recently arrived here. Romantic, isn't it, to think that we jostle a Nihilist in our morning walk, and sit opposite a possible political assassin at a *table d'hôte*?"

Again Colonel Cliff looked so steadily at Pleasant that the Indian felt almost tempted openly to resent it. It happened that Alice noticed this steadfast and meaning look, and the trouble which it seemed to cause Pleasant, and she wondered at it.

"Nihilists, indeed!" said Mrs. Harrelston. "A pretty subject of conversation! All such people ought to be burned at the stake — they and those who sympathize with them!"

"The worst of it is that they make dupes, and carry ruin and dishonour in their train," said the Colonel.

Pleasant was so puzzled by the Colonel's remarks that

he then and there fell into a brown study. Of all men in the world, Colonel Cliff was the last man whom he would have suspected of knowledge of the conspiracy of Stanislas and Vera, and of his own innocent and accidental connection with it. While he was standing like one in a trance he heard Alice saying to the Colonel, in a low voice —

"Alas! yes; they are the flowers which you kindly sent me. I could not keep them from Mr. Merrinott's destroying fingers. He has been strewing them before me ——"

"As a tardy floral offering to propitiate you for his neglect in not sending you any himself, I suppose," said the Colonel, with a cynical little laugh, which brought Pleasant out of his reverie.

Then Bertine came in with some cards left for Alice and Mrs. Harrelston, and the conversation drifted into social channels. Mrs. Harrelston took Colonel Cliff to a niche in the library to show him a *menu* printed on satin in gorgeous polychromic text, and Pleasant got back at once to his post beside Alice.

"You may look over the cards with me," she said, "if you will promise not to tear them in pieces, as you did the flowers. Will you be good enough to hold the card-basket?"

He took the dainty silken-lined panier, and Alice tossed card after card into it, the Indian glancing eagerly at the name on each one, searching for the announcement among all these remembrancers of a possible rival. Suddenly he bethought himself once more of the object of his visit — the renewed declaration of his love for Alice. The Colonel was talking in loud and merry strain to Mrs. Harrelston about dinners and dinner bills. Pleasant seized his opportunity, and leaning forward, said, almost in a whisper —

"When may I come again?"

A presumptuous and unsuitable suitor would have received a sharp answer, for Alice's wit was keen, and she had the Parisian talent of saying the word that cuts like the blade that stabs you before you see its flash. But there was so much of longing reverence in Pleasant's tone — the whisper sent such a thrill to her heart — and in the bending of his proud neck there was such an unwilling confession of repentance and self-surrender, that a cutting response did not come. So she answered, simply —

"Come whenever you think that you will find us entertaining." She went on inspecting the cards and speculating on the answer that her mother would have expected her to give to Pleasant's question. For the first time in her life she felt a kind of guilty joy in the knowledge that she was acting somewhat against her mother's wish. But she consoled herself with the reflection that in process of time she could probably bring her mamma to her own way of thinking. "Mrs. Brown-Wylde, Mrs. Euston, Mr. Marlow, M. le Comte Ponitzi, Mr. Van Rosslyn —— Oh! here are the cards of our Russian acquaintances!" She raised her voice a bit, and looked somewhat inquisitively at Pleasant as she handed him two pieces of pasteboard. "The musician and his sister! By the way, Mademoiselle Vera appears to have made her way to Paris, for Bertine tells me that she left a bouquet for me while I was shut up in my sick chamber."

"Oh yes! she has been here for some little time," said Pleasant, without any surprise in his voice. "I see her quite often. She is studying medicine — as I reckon you remember that she intended to do."

Alice opened her eyes widely. This girl, this woman, concerning whom Caro had such grave doubts — this strange personage who had crossed their path only to cast a shadow on it — enjoyed the acquaintance and confidence of Pleasant Merrinott? And all the time that Alice had

been tossing feverishly on her couch of pain because she had suspected Pleasant of insincerity, he had been seeing this woman — often. Alice veiled her distress, but it tugged sorely at her heart.

"I suppose," said the girl, softly, "that Mademoiselle Vera still believes in your enthusiasm?" Then, without giving him time to reply, she repeated the name which she had read on the card. "Vera Labonoff. Is it *noff* or *now?* Do you not think that the name has a kind of mysterious flavour?"

"Well, no, Miss Harrelston," answered Pleasant, cautiously; "I cannot say that I think so. Indeed, I had not thought about it. The lady seems strong-minded, but——"

"Vera Labonoff," said Colonel Cliff, whose sharp ear had caught the sound of the name, and who came back to Pleasant and Alice; "why, that is one of the persons said to be—— Beg your pardon, did you speak, Mrs. Harrelston?"

"No, no. Do you know this Mademoiselle Vera, then, Colonel?"

"I have not that honour. Excuse me; I have probably confounded the lady with some one else. But the name is almost exactly identical with that of a person mentioned to me as connected with the Nihilist conspiracy, and lately arrived in Paris. It's an odd coincidence."

Pleasant started perceptibly, and looked at Colonel Cliff as if he would like to read his thoughts. What did this mean?

"Oh, I can't think this lady conspires," said Alice, but with a tremor of doubt in her voice. "She is the sister of Monsieur Stanislas — and he never struck me as a conspirator. He is devoted to nothing but his profession."

"Well, I don't know," said Mrs. Harrelston. "There is something uncanny about *her*. She was so frank and

engaging in Switzerland that we could not well avoid her, especially because of our acquaintance with her brother. But I think the brother would better advise her to be more retiring. I should be horrified at the thought that we had adopted a conspirator as a friend. I would not encourage her visits, daughter."

"Perhaps Mr. Merrinott can tell us about her political sentiments," said Alice, suddenly. "He sees her quite often."

"Beware, Mr. Merrinott, or you will get tangled in the web of a conspiracy," said Colonel Cliff, shaking his finger at the Indian and laughing.

"I am no conspirator, sir," said Pleasant, rather hotly. But he was anxious to avoid further conversation on the topic for the moment. "The lady seems to me more interested in the study of medicine than in anything else."

"Ah! Very likely she is not the Nihilist," said the Colonel. "The name seemed identical. It would be hard, however, to imagine Stanislas as having a sister who conspires, for I happen to know that he is anything but a conspirator — rather strongly in favour of the established government in Russia, I should say."

"*Do* find out, Mr. Merrinott, please," said Mrs. Harrelston; "and if she proves to be Nihilistic in her notions, I am certain that you would be as much horrified as we could be."

"I am sure she is a right honest and deserving young woman, whatever her ideas on government may be," said the Cherokee, doggedly.

This answer did not please Mrs. Harrelston, and she filed it away for future use against Pleasant.

"One is compelled to exercise great care in the choice of acquaintances in these large capitals," she remarked coldly; but the observation seemed entirely lost on Pleasant. She determined to revenge herself for his indiffer-

ence by advising Alice to retire to her room, under the pretext that she was becoming fatigued; but just as she was about to do so she saw that the Indian was bringing his visit to a close.

While Colonel Cliff was moving the bouquet-stand back to its original position, and was contemplating the ruin which Pleasant had wrought among his flowers, the young Cherokee took the hand which Alice extended to him, and became gently engrossed in something he saw in her eyes. He would not have released the soft virginal palm for an indefinite period had not Alice confusedly and hastily signified her desire that he should return to his senses. When he did remember where he was, he said —

"You are very tired now, and I am afraid that I have wearied you." His voice fell, but Alice heard all that he said. "If you could know what joy it gives me to see that you are recovering! And I may come to-morrow, or the day after?"

"We shall always be glad to see you, Mr. Merrinott," said Alice, looking at her mother as if to indicate that she desired Mrs. Harrelston's confirmation of this statement. But that lady contented herself with bidding the Indian good morning, and after he had gone, bowing formally, through the hall door, she said —

"Mr. Merrinott is a singular person."

"He is a good fellow," said the Colonel, warmly. "Innocent of the world, and confiding. Do you know, I really hope he will not get into the hands of any of these clever Russian conspirators. They might turn his head."

"Do you think there is any danger for him?" said Alice.

"Hum! I don't know. Paris is full of snares for those who are not wary," answered the Colonel, with an air of fatherly wisdom. And presently he took his leave with a certain wistful tenderness in his manner, which did not

escape Alice's notice, although she affected not to perceive it.

When he had gone Mrs. Harrelston left Alice alone for a few minutes, warning her that she would soon be summoned to retire. The girl leaned back in her chair and looked out over the pretty garden, at that moment radiant with sunshine. Suddenly a figure appeared at the gate — the figure of an old man, clad in a shabby great-coat, and with a battered hat shading his face. Alice was surprised to see him pause, remove his hat, showing venerable features, seamed with scars and wrinkles, and make a low bow, evidently intended for her. She at once remembered Bertine's description of the old man who had brought Vera's bouquet, and murmured to herself, "It must be the same man! What can he want with me!"

The patriarch clapped his hat on again, and glanced behind him as if he were afraid of being followed. Then he plunged one hand into a pocket of his ancient coat, drew forth a little white parcel tied with a red string, pointed at Alice, nodded his head as if to indicate that the bundle was for her, and threw it into the garden, where it lodged near the half-unearthed roots of a lilac-bush. Alice followed its flight from his hand to the ground with her gaze, and then glanced up at the gateway again. The old man was gone.

Bertine came in at that moment to take her young mistress's orders.

"Step down into the garden, Bertine," said Alice, "and bring me that odd-looking piece of paper near the lilac tree."

She pointed out the place, and spoke imperiously, so that Bertine understood she was not expected to display any curiosity. In another minute Alice held the missive in her hand.

"Now ask mamma if I may have some tea," she said;

"I feel faint." And when she was alone again she tore open the letter. For it was merely a letter, written on a large piece of coarse white paper, and tied instead of sealed. It contained these words in English, in a cramped, old-fashioned script —

"Beautiful lady, do not set your heart upon the young Indian. His duty and his inclination will lead him away from you. It is to spare you pain that I give you this warning. Accept it as from a friend, and do not trifle with the course of destiny. If it becomes necessary for me to send you a second message, I will use means to convince you of the wisdom of my advice."

There was no signature. The English spelling was correct, but the handwriting was evidently that of a foreigner. Alice could hear her heart beating loudly and with unwonted rapidity as she folded the paper and placed it carefully in her pocket. The mystery and the impudence of the warning, and the anxiety which this sudden interference of a stranger in her as yet unexpressed preferences aroused, brought with them new strength. Alice felt a keener desire than ever to recover her health that she might ferret out this secret adviser and get at the motive of the advice so strangely proffered. She shut her eyes and tried to think carefully, but she was surprised to find that the image of Mademoiselle Vera constantly obtruded itself upon her mental vision.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SAVE ME!

ALICE grew better so fast that Mr. Harrelston daily congratulated himself upon the success of his experiment, of the need for which even Mrs. Harrelston no longer ventured to express many doubts. The anxious mother was somewhat reconciled to her husband's radical method of treating the daughter's malady, because she fancied that she could detect in the demeanour of Alice a growing coldness with regard to Pleasant Merrinott. "I hope she is recovering her senses," was the mother's thought. And she fell to studying, more earnestly than ever, means by which she might render what she was pleased to consider Mr. Merrinott's plot against her peace of mind of no avail.

There was but one thing which caused her to hesitate in her counterplots, and this was a mysterious sadness which seemed to have fastened upon Alice's usually merry and kindly temperament. In company the girl appeared to have recovered her old spirits, but when she fancied herself alone she gave way to profound melancholy. Her mother took measures to observe her, and was once or twice on the point of asking for an explanation of these moods, vaguely fearing that they might proceed from some hidden disastrous cause of which she knew nothing. Yet each time that she had fully decided to bring Alice to con-

fession, she remembered that her daughter had always merited, as she had ever enjoyed, her fullest confidence, and she felt as if to question her were wrong. So she watched and waited. But she discovered nothing.

The truth was that Alice was fighting a great battle in her soul. She could not fully make up her mind to doubt the truth, the loyalty of Pleasant's devotion, and she felt that she loved him more than tongue could tell. Now that she had become familiar with his originalities she liked them better than the polished conventional ways of the city-bred young and old men who came to her father's house. There had been moments when Pleasant's provincialism, his rusticity, had offended her delicate taste. At times she had ventured to think that she might find his origin and his peculiar complexion unpleasant, and a trifle ridiculous, when she saw them in the clear and refined atmosphere of Paris, but she had finally laid aside all fears on that score. The youthful Cherokee was as romantic and impressive in the capital as he had appeared when she first beheld him in Interlaken. The nameless charm which had then enthralled her heart, and held it a willing captive when they were together in the valley of Meiringen, was as powerful as as first. She loved the strange contrasts in Pleasant's nature, the almost feminine weakness which he manifested at times, and the savage lack of restraint, the primitive fearlessness of opinion and consequences, which came swiftly in defiance of the gentler and feebler traits in his complex nature.

But yet she was beginning to doubt, and she suffered as only noble natures can suffer. She did not distrust his fidelity to herself; and it was not merely the dread of losing the affection which he surely felt for her that wounded her spirit. It was a growing fear that he was in danger of proving untrue to himself, of falling into some snare, or of being led astray and made the instrument of design-

ing persons. Of course she was ready to rise against the influence which was likely to destroy her happiness the moment she could see it through the thick darkness which surrounded her. In the midst of this darkness there was one figure which constantly stood out in luminous relief — and that was the form of Vera. With the unerring feminine instinct, Alice discerned that that woman could, if she willed to do so, wield influence over Pleasant Merrinott, and she trembled as she thought that this intruding stranger could blast her happiness with a breath.

It happened that Pleasant, who had become a privileged visitor at the Harrelstons' house, found Alice alone one afternoon, although Mrs. Harrelston generally took ample precautions against such a contingency. Alice was in the library, dressed for a ride in the Bois, and trying to distract her attention from her doubts by reading one of the Paris morning papers while waiting for her mother. Her eyes fell upon a little article headed "The Science of Conspiracy," and, without knowing exactly why, she began to read it. The author alluded to the Nihilist refugees from Russia then supposed to be at work in Switzerland and in Paris, perfecting their plans, and he indulged in a classification of these determined conspirators into three classes. Alice slowly conned the details. Nihilists in class the first, it appeared, were in favour of a purely political revolution; Nihilists in class the second, of a political revolution followed by a social and economical one; but Nihilists in class the third — and these, said the author, were most formidable and dangerous — desired the total overturning of the present order of things and an absolute levelling down. "This last-named section," continued the writer, "detests the past, abhors what it calls archaic studies, wishes to abolish science, demands the destruction of monuments and libraries, and would preserve only the useful trades, and perhaps not all of those."

"Dreamers! they are mad!" said the girl, laying down the paper, and starting violently as she heard a ring at the garden gate, and looking up saw the young Indian with his impatient hand on the latch.

Pleasant glanced out at the window as he came into the library. "I am so glad to find you alone," he said hastily, coming up to her with his swift noble gait, and looking down into her tender face. "Oh, Alice! tell me quickly, before any one comes to interrupt us, what I have done to wound you. Have I hoped in vain? I feel that you are right angry with me."

It was one of the few times that he had called her "Alice" since the memorable night on the terrace at Berne, and the sudden endearing familiarity, which he took with the proud unconsciousness of one who assumes his right, pleased her more than she was willing to admit.

"Answer me!" he said, passionately. "I cannot sleep until you do. If I should lose your love — your confidence — I may say your love, may I not, Alice? — it would drive me to despair."

She had been looking at the huge bronze on her father's writing-desk, but now she looked up at him, with a startled expression, and Pleasant's heart bounded joyously as he saw that there were tears in her eyes. Her silence was more eloquent than words.

"Speak, Alice!" said Pleasant, throwing his hat upon a chair, as she had seen him throw it many times, with a gesture as if he were preparing for a struggle, and meant to cast aside everything that annoyed him. "Speak, and set my mind at rest. I need your love to-day more than I ever needed it before. Without it I should be so weary of the world that I ——"

"What would you do?" said the girl, breathlessly.

"I don't know; something desperate, I reckon. Everything goes wrong in this wretched world; everything here

is tainted by injustice and oppression and guilt; everything seems lost, unfit to endure — everything except *you*. If there was ever an angel on earth, it is you. If there was ever one who could save men, it is you! Oh, Alice! save me!"

This plea conquered her. She was in his arms, on his breast; his kisses were on her brow, her eyes, her hair. She was glad she had yielded. She was proud that he could draw her resistlessly to himself, and fold her in those strong arms, which held her so gently yet so firmly.

And he had asked her to save him! He was in danger; some secret grief weighed upon his spirit. In his incoherent passion he had spoken the very prayer of his soul, and she had flown to answer it. Save him! Save him! Joy! By that sign she would conquer any and every invisible enemy that threatened to take him from her and to do him deadly harm!

What she said to him she knew not. What he murmured as he held her in his embrace she heard not. Her whole being was engrossed in the mighty joy of loving, of being loved. In those consummate moments of pure passion when two virgin hearts are made one, language gives way to the inarticulate; grammar is too weak to contain the emotions which burst its bonds as swollen torrents break down barriers. Their lips met in one long-entrancing final kiss, full of the intoxication of youth and love and joy, and then Alice released herself, not without difficulty, from her lover's arms.

As she turned, with paling face, to the window, with the thought that some one might have seen Master Pleasant's frenzy and her own weakness, the memory of the mysterious letter which the old messenger had thrown down beside the roots of the lilac tree came to give her a sharp pain. Her first impulse was to turn to Pleasant, to take

the letter from its concealment in her bosom, to hand it to him, and to ask him what it meant. Who was it that dared to warn her not to accept the love of this youth who adored her, and to whom her heart yearned? She must know! Her hand strayed to the letter's hiding place. In another moment she might know all.

But ere that moment had ended there was a light footstep in the hall, a timid knock at the library door. Pleasant turned quickly away to contemplate the garden walk, and Alice was arranging her bonnet-strings before a tiny mirror set in a silver frame in a corner of the mantelpiece, when Miss Caro Merlin entered. She understood the situation as soon as Alice turned to greet her. There was a radiance upon Miss Harrelston's lovely face which could be due to only one cause.

"Excuse me, Alice dear, for popping in unannounced," said Caro, "but no one came to answer the bell, and, finding the garden gate ajar, I strayed in."

"Just in time to join me in a ride in the Bois," said Alice, recovering her self-possession, and hastening to greet Caro. "The garden gate ajar! Mr. Merrinott, I fear that is your fault. However, as it has spared Miss Merlin some trouble, you are forgiven. But where are the servants?" And she stepped into the hall.

She came back presently, and stood looking at Caro and Pleasant, who were chatting together, for a full minute before she spoke. It was as if she were making up her mind whether she ought to speak or not. At last she said, with a forced smile—

"An adventure! The reason that you were obliged to wait, Caro, is an odd one. All the servants are in the back garden, among the shrubbery, hunting for a strange man who has strayed in, and whom the coachman thinks is burglariously inclined. Mamma is watching the search from an upper window with indignation and—enthusiasm.

And the maid-servants are so frightened that I suppose they did not hear the bell."

"A burglar!" said Caro. "Mr. Merrinott! Do go and scalp him! Be romantic!"

"I was thinking," said Pleasant, speaking slowly, and in a troubled way, "that once or twice on my road here this afternoon it seemed to me that I was followed by a man I had never seen before. His movements were so curious that if we had been on the prairie I should have made him pass and keep ahead of me; but I was not certain that that sort of thing would work here. I lost sight of him just as I entered this avenue."

Alice looked puzzled. The conversation turned upon another fruitful topic — Mr. Merrinott's culpable negligence in not having visited the Merlins more than once since his return from Switzerland.

"There's no man in the garden after all," said Mrs. Harrelston, bustling in, equipped for the drive. "Miss Caro, I am glad to see you. Alice, we shall take her with us. Ah! Mr. Merrinott! You are unlucky to-day; you arrive just as we are going for a drive. The carriage is at the gate. Will you forgive us? It is such a rare afternoon! Now, Alice dear, are you well wrapped up?" And Alice's mother had the young ladies on the way to the carriage before the Indian had finished his rather confused apologies, had signalled an eloquent good-bye to Alice, and had got twenty yards down the street.

Alice found herself looking carefully at the lilac tree as she passed it, for she could not help believing that the reported apparition in the garden had some connection with another anonymous message for her. But no paper was there. She talked with a merriment that she did not feel as she reclined on the soft cushions of the roomy open carriage, and felt the gentle October breeze fanning her temples.

Caro, seated opposite her, was curiously silent, for she

knew not what to say. She had come to the Harrelston's that afternoon determined to confer with Alice on the subject of Mademoiselle Vera. Caro had become convinced that that extraordinary young woman had been the object of minute investigation on the part of Colonel Cliff since she had talked with him about her, and that some odd reason prevented him from telling her the result of his inquiries. "Perhaps he has told Alice," thought the girl; "or if he has not, perhaps Pleasant Merrinott, who sees so much of Mademoiselle Vera, has done so. I must ask her." So she had forthwith deserted her studies, taken a cab, and hastened to Alice, to find her alone with the young Indian. Caro felt that it would not be delicate or proper to bring up the subject of Pleasant's relations to Vera on that particular afternoon, so she contented herself with answering Mrs. Harrelston's questions about her *début* at La Vange's concert, which was to occur ten days sooner than originally intended.

"I tremble when I think of the twenty-first of October —that is the date now," said Miss Merlin; "and as for **me**, I'm afraid she will have hysterics before all the preparations are finished. You see so much depends on it, for if I succeed I am sure to be engaged to make my *début* in the London spring season. In London. Think of it! Oh dear! I am afraid it is a magnificent dream."

"Not at all, my dear," said Mrs. Harrelston, kindly. "Let us hope, on the contrary, that it will be a superb reality. Eric shall send for a box for us to-morrow. And does Monsieur Stanislas continue to prophesy good things for you?"

"He does, indeed," said Caro, blushing; "and Mélari says that Stanislas, in spite of his youth and his enthusiasm —because you know he is famous for the latter quality—is one of the best judges in Europe. But I don't know——"

She sighed and looked down. They came into the

throng and were soon moving slowly around the lake in company with the thousands of good, bad, and indifferent folk who go out to the famous wood to see and to be seen. Mrs. Harrelston watched the movements of an elderly English woman who that day made herself the observed of all observers by driving a pair of high-stepping bay horses, and handling the reins as if she had been bred to the art. Caro languidly gazed at the flocks of gabbling ducks, engaged in their eternal dispute with the white swans on the sward by the lake; and Alice was scanning the quadruple rank of luxurious vehicles and the variegated assemblage of ladies of every rank in the social scale when, standing on the walk next the outer rank, in which the Harrelston carriage was slowly trundling along, and so near that he could, if he chose, place his hand upon her arm when she came up to him, the girl saw the old man with the scarred and wrinkled face — the aged messenger who had left her the anonymous note of warning. His recognition was as instant as her own; he had evidently learned of her intention to ride in the Bois, and awaited her there. Her curiosity to see what he would do was so great that it quite vanquished her sense of repulsion and fright, and she leaned forward, observing his movements. The old man quickly took from one of the pockets of his greasy coat a bundle of printed papers, which he began coolly to distribute to the occupants of the carriages directly preceding that of the Harrelstons. Alice held her breath as she came face to face with the old man. He raised his eyes to hers with a gentle expression, in which there was something of entreaty, and laid a paper upon her lap.

"What is that, daughter?" said Mrs. Harrelston. "Some advertisement, I suppose. Do throw it away. I thought it was forbidden to annoy people with circulars — and things — in the Bois."

"Yes, mamma," said Alice, whose hand had closed tightly upon a note tied with red cord, like the first one that she had received, and artfully concealed under the other paper, "it is a circular. *Annexe de la Banque des Indes.* What impudence!" And she cast it out to flutter down to the sand in the road. A moment afterward she managed to transfer the small note to her pocket without attracting attention.

That ride seemed interminable to Alice. When they were once more at home, and while Mrs. Harrelston was urging Caro to stay to dinner, the girl managed to escape to her own room for a few minutes. She tore open the missive and read it through two or three times. It was written in the same foreign chirography as the other, and contained these words: —

"Beautiful lady, as you did not take notice of my first warning, forgive me for sending you another. I told you that I would convince you of the wisdom of my advice that you should not set your heart upon the young American. If you will come to the address written below, to-night or to-morrow night, between ten and eleven o'clock, I will show you something that will teach you how useless it is to interfere with the course of destiny. You need not be afraid to come alone; or you can bring your maid with you if you like; you will be in no danger from an old man who is earnest in his wish to spare you pain, and to show you why your choice is not wise."

At the bottom of the sheet was the name of a street, of which Alice had never heard, and the number "41."

The girl sat down in a *fauteuil* and tried to consider calmly what it was best to do. These anonymous letters did not come from Mademoiselle Vera, then? Of this there no longer seemed any doubt. Alice felt as if this conviction afforded her great relief. What *could* she do?

The fire of resolution shone in her dark eyes, and she

rose up with the air of one thoroughly resolved upon a great effort for success.

"He asked me to save him, and I *will* save him!" she whispered, as she rang the bell for Bertine, and began to prepare for dinner. "I will go to the old man's rendezvous this very night, and I will know all!"

Had that venerable apostle of destruction, Ignatius, the Jewish instrument maker, whom Pleasant had seen with Stanislas and Vera in Berne, and who had been watching Pleasant's movements ever since, realized that instead of frightening Alice into relinquishing her attachment to the young Indian, he had, by his anonymous appeals to her, made her a thousand times more resolved than ever to cling to Pleasant, and to rescue him from any peril that threatened, he would have admitted that for once he had not shown that knowledge of human nature which is reasonably to be expected of an arch-conspirator.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

TRIAL AND PARTING.

WHEN Alice came downstairs, and learned that Caro had decided to stay to dinner, and that her father and mother were going to the opera, her eyes shone more brightly than ever. Her plan was instantly formed. The early dinner was unceremonious, and quickly served, as Mr. and Mrs. Harrelston wished to be in their *lôge* for the first act of *La Juive*. Alice talked but little, and Caro attributed her reticence to her preoccupation with her love. Poor little Miss Merlin would have given the world to have thrown her arms around Alice's neck, and to have passed an hour in confessing and hearing confession of the joys and pains which love awakens in maidens' hearts, but something told her that Alice was in no mood to confess just yet. "She will tell me by-and-by," thought Miss Merlin; "she can't keep it to herself."

Over dessert Alice talked a bit about her health, announced that her recovery was complete, that she felt stronger than ever, and believed the fever had been a beneficent visitor. Mr. and Mrs. Harrelston exchanged glances, and it was easy to see that they were delighted at what Alice had said.

"But you must not be prodigal of your new strength, daughter," said the banker. "And, above all, be careful not to venture into the night air."

"Oh, you are too careful of me, papa," said Alice, who felt very guilty, but went on forming her plan with great determination.

"Let Caro have the *coupé*, and let Bertine accompany her home, when her visit is ended," said Mrs. Harrelston to Alice, as she rang for her own carriage. "And now, young ladies, don't prolong your gossip until a late hour. Miss Caro, keep up courage about your *début*. Alice, if you are not asleep when I return, I shall have to scold you. Good night."

Before the sound of the carriage-wheels had died away in the distance, Alice had summoned Bertine to her rooms, leaving Caro idly turning over music-books at the piano in a little parlour. Alice closed the door, and laid her hand lightly on her maid's shoulder.

"*Bertine*," she said, impulsively, "*tu m'aimes, n'est ce pas?*"

Bertine stared at her young mistress for a moment, and then, in her quaint German-French, at once asseverated that she would cut off her right hand, or walk a thousand leagues, to please Mademoiselle Alice. Furthermore, she did not know what she could have done to displease Mademoiselle; and she began to wring her apron, to twist her shoulders, and to cry.

"Dry your eyes, you foolish girl," said Alice. "Bertine, I am going to do something to-night which may seem strange, imprudent, wrong, to you, or to any one else who hears of it. I wish you to accompany me, to help me, and to say nothing about it to any living soul, except Guillaume, the coachman. Do you hear?"

"*Mon Dieu, Mademoiselle!* What are you going to do?" stammered Bertine, before whose eyes flashed a terrifying vision of the dark-faced Indian eloping with her mistress in hasty and melodramatic fashion. Then, without waiting for an answer, and wiping her eyes, she

added, stoutly, "But whatever Mademoiselle does, and wherever she goes, she can count on me."

"Thank you, Bertine. We shall do nothing of which we need be ashamed, but it may look a little odd. Now listen. When Miss Merlin goes home, you and I will accompany her in the carriage. We will not get out at her house, but as soon as we have bidden her good night, Guillaume must drive rapidly away. Only instead of coming back here, he must hurry as fast as he can to — to ——" She took the anonymous letter from her pocket and glanced at the address of old Ignatius. "To the Rue — I will copy it for you; it's such an odd name — No. 41; and he must wait for us at the corner of the street until we return. It is in the neighbourhood of the Luxembourg. We shall be at the No. 41 only a few minutes, and then he must drive us back as quickly as he possibly can, so that we can be at home long before mother and father return from the opera. Do you understand? Don't stand staring at me like that! It is an errand of charity that we are going on — only — it must be kept a profound secret. Go and tell Guillaume, and mind that he says not a word to any of the other servants."

"Yes, Mademoiselle," said Bertine, taking a slip of written paper which her mistress handed her, and staring rather wildly. "Is Mademoiselle not afraid to go away over the river a ——"

"Bertine! Go and give the instructions, and that paper to Guillaume, and be ready to start."

Alice returned to Caro, and was so bright and entertaining for an hour, that Miss Merlin was loth to depart. But when the clock struck nine she arose.

"I must go, dear," she said. "At ten ma would have a fit. She has an idea that Paris is a place in which a young woman is in constant danger of abduction."

"*Must* you go?" said Miss Harrelston. "Well, the

carriage will be at the door in a few minutes, and I will drive with you to your door. I shall have Bertine for my escort back, and the sight of the streets will do me good."

"Oh, Alice, I shall not hear of such a thing," said Caro, looking quite terrified. "What would your mother say? And the night air!"

"Fudge!" said Alice. "Not a breath of air can get into that *coupé* of ours—it's a dreadfully ill-ventilated old thing. And I want to ride after Alzor, the new horse—who goes like the wind. Papa drives to the bank with him in fifteen minutes."

The carriage was called; Bertine appeared bearing various dark-coloured wraps, and a black lace shawl, and Alice and Caro, comfortably installed in the richly furnished *coupé*, with the little maid nestling on a stool in front of them, were soon whirling across the city in the direction of Caro's residence. The new horse Alzor was certainly a treasure; his twinkling hoofs made mock of space; the carriage flew down the long wooded avenue in the Bois, past the mansions around the Triumphal Arch, down the Avenue de la Reine Hortense, and had turned the corners of the Parc Monceau, and was nearing Montmartre before Alice could collect her thoughts. Caro looked sharply at her companion once or twice. She fancied that she could hear Alice's heart beating loudly, and she began to imagine that there was something wrong; but just as she was about to ask, impulsively, a leading question, Alice clapped her hands, praised Alzor's speed so merrily, and seemed so natural once more, that Miss Merlin's suspicions were disarmed.

Alzor's ardour was a trifle calmed by the extremely steep hill up which he had to draw the carriage before reaching the Rue de l'Orient, and when he stopped at Mrs. Merlin's gate he blew a blast from his nostrils which was loud enough to have alarmed all the neighbourhood,

and which brought Caro's mother out of the shadow of a tree where she had been nervously waiting the girl's return.

"Mercy! what's that?" said Mrs. Merlin, coming to the carriage window. "Is that hoss possessed of a demon? Caro! Oh! it's reel good of them to send you home in a kerridge. What, Alice! Well enough to be out o' nights. Come right in. Caro," she said, lowering her voice, "Stanislas is up in your study-room, a playin' fit to draw tears out of the walls. He's mortal distracted and worried about something. I give him a right broad hint to go, but he said he would stay until you come in."

Alice found it hard to decline Mrs. Merlin's pressing invitation to "come in and stay long enough to take a cup of tea. Afraid your mother'll come back and find you out? Well, she won't scold you any more for an hour 'n she will for half an hour, will she? I'm sure you're very kind to bring ——"

Guillaume reined the demon-horse Alzor round about, the creature's hoofs clattered on the stones, and the carriage was whirling away before Mrs. Merlin had finished her sentence.

"I wonder if Alice ain't jest a leetle stuck up now and then?" was her reflection as she followed her daughter in.

Alice's heart beat more loudly than ever as the carriage flashed along the precipitous descent of the Rue Lepic, awakening angry comments from the bare-headed work-women, who narrowly escaped immolation by Alzor as they wearily climbed homeward, and as the light vehicle rolled down the Rue Blanche, through the Place de la Trinité, and away to the grand boulevards. As she passed the Opera she looked at her watch. It was a quarter to ten. "If mamma should take a sudden fancy to return home before the Opera is over, what a scene is in store for me!" thought the girl. But then arose the all-absorbing

thought of her mission. There was a secret to unravel—a man to save from some mysterious danger. Should she not make one earnest effort to protect her love? Who could blame her?

She grew bolder as she approached the scene of the meeting, which was perhaps to be of capital importance to her future peace and happiness. Her lips were firmly closed; her eyes shone like twin stars; the heavenly colour came into her cheeks—the real rose of the dawn—appropriate enough, for a great resolve was dawning in her spirit. She knew not whom she was to meet, or what she was to say, but she felt confident that she was to find out how to save Pleasant Merrinott from becoming the dupe of conspirators—from sacrificing his future, from being drawn away from her!

The Rue de la Paix—the Place Vendome—a panoramic glimpse of the arcades of the Rue de Rivoli—a rattle over the half-deserted spaces of the Place du Carrousel—a look into the smoothly flowing Seine from the arch of a bridge—then a long whirl through narrow, ill-smelling, and poorly lighted streets! Alice began to feel as if her courage would ebb away. She grasped Bertine's hand so tightly that the poor girl winced. Her head was hot, and it seemed to her as if the passers-by turned around to stare after her and to comment upon her extraordinary conduct. One of the wheels struck a loose stone and gave the carriage a severe shaking. Alice sprang up from her seat, trembling in every limb. Then she sank down again, drawing the black lace shawl over her head and concealing her face, and so she remained, leaning back in a corner, with Bertine's quizzical and half-terrified eyes looking up at her, until the carriage stopped. Her heart gave a great bound as Guillaume opened the door.

"Mademoiselle will perhaps find it better that I should wait here, as the street is very narrow, and a carriage like

ours is a rare sight in these parts," said the coachman, whose grave, impassive face betrayed no curiosity, and would have manifested none had he been convinced that he were driving to a rendezvous of witches or demons. "This is the street, and the odd numbers are on the right side. Forty-one; it is not far. Shall I step and see?"

"No, thank you! Come, Bertine!" said Alice, courageously stepping down from the carriage and glancing around her. "Guillaume, don't stir from this spot until I return! How long will it take you to drive home swiftly?"

"Half an hour, Mademoiselle. It is a long ——"

"We shall come back in a few minutes." And the figures of the two girls glided into the shadows which overhung the mean-looking street.

Guillaume watched them until they disappeared in a doorway. Then he climbed back to his seat, and began to wonder what it all meant. He had been sitting there but a few moments when a circumstance occurred which set him to wondering more earnestly, and caused him serious annoyance. A black-looking fellow in a silk cap and a blue blouse loomed up, seemingly out of nowhere, beside Alzor's head, and put out his hand as if to fondle the high-spirited animal.

"Look out for your claws, my ancient; my horse bites," said Guillaume, in the familiar and contemptuous language of the street.

"Perhaps you will tell me, my fine fellow, whose carriage this is," said the man in the blouse, in a soft, caressing voice.

"Perhaps I will not," said Guillaume. "And you just move away from my horse's head. The butt end of my whip is hard."

The man in the blouse laughed aloud. "You won't tell us, won't you? You are original, as original as a

porcelain dog. Never mind, my hearty, we shall know soon enough without any of your aid. But thank you all the same." And he disappeared.

"*Un mouchard!*" * said Guillaume, in dismay and under his breath. "Now, what *does* this all mean? This is what one gets himself into by working for strangers. B-r-r-r! I feel cold all down my back!"

Alice and Bertine stopped a moment, breathless and hot, as they entered the dark passage-way in the old house on which they saw the mysterious number, "41." Alice thought that she saw a figure stir in a corner, and she drew back, instinctively putting out both hands as if to protect herself. "Who am I to ask for? There is no porter's lodge here. How am I to know? I shall faint if I have to wait in this dreadful place!" These were her thoughts, and by the timorous manner in which Bertine clung to her skirts she learned that small dependence was to be placed on the poor maid. She felt her way to the wall and leaned against it, trying to resolve on a course of action. Just then she heard the sound of footsteps slowly descending a flight of stairs, which she could not see.

"Oh, Mademoiselle!" whispered Bertine, and she turned to fly, but Alice caught her by her wrist, and held her.

The footsteps came nearer. There was the feeble twinkle of a candle, and in a moment Alice saw that she stood at the foot of a tortuous and blackened stone stairway, such as one sees only in the ancient houses in the most venerable quarters of Paris. Just at the turning of the stairs stood the old man who had given her the two warnings. He was protecting the glimmering flame of his candle with his hand, and although he peered forward, Alice felt sure that he did not see her.

* A police spy.

"Was I mistaken?" he said in a low voice, as if to himself, but in English. "Or did I hear some one inquiring for me?" Then he bent his head and listened intently.

Before she answered Alice looked very carefully at him. It did not seem to her that there was anything to fear from that feeble old creature, whose face, framed as it was in the darkness all about it, and brought out strongly by the candle-light close to it, would have done well enough for the picture of some aged saint, had there not been a mingled expression of sternness and cunning at the lips.

"Well," thought Alice, "I am my father's daughter. I have heard him say that he never knew what fear was. Let me see if I can summon up a little of his courage." She stepped forward, and answering in English, said —

"Perhaps you heard *us* come in, sir?"

An expression of real joy flitted over the old man's face. "I am glad that you have been kind enough to come, daughter," he said. "You are the lady to whom I gave the note to-day, are you not?"

"I am."

"Step up this way, please. Ah! you are not alone. Oh! it is your maid, I suppose. Come up two flights; you have nothing to fear; and I will not detain you long."

He held the light forward, and stood aside on the narrow stone stairs to let Alice and Bertine pass. His courtesy was ceremonious, and Alice liked the sound of the English as he spoke it, with a certain primness which betokened the foreigner who was determined to get everything right.

After some stumbling, Alice found her way through a low door into an humble room, scrupulously clean, and very decently furnished. The tiles of the floor were red,

and gave a pleasant sheen under the flame of two candles burning in a rusty candelabra on the table. In one corner stood a small work-bench, covered with tools, and beneath it were boxes and baskets filled with bits of iron, brass, and copper. The old man came in behind Bertine, passed through the room into another one at the side, left his candle there, and returned. Then he gravely motioned Alice to take a seat in a roomy wooden arm-chair, and beckoning to Bertine, he said in French, with a smile, "Can you read?"

Bertine answered very decidedly that she could.

"Well, as what I have to say to your mistress is private, would you mind stepping into the next room? You will find a light and some books on the table. You can leave the door ajar, and when I have said what I have to say, I will call you."

Alice was about to protest, but she rallied her courage, and made a sign to Bertine that she was to obey. There was nothing gruesome in this nook in a remote quarter of Paris; one of the long windows in the thick wall was open, and through it Alice could see the October moonlight shining on some vines on a high trellis. There were flowers on the table; a Paris evening paper and one or two German books were within reach of Alice's hand. When Bertine had disappeared behind the door of the other room, the old man carefully closed the one opening on to the stairs, and then turning with almost mournful look to her, he said—

"My child, I will be very plain and very brief. You are young, lovely, accomplished, rich, and happy. You live a life that to millions of poorer people would seem an ideal one. But shadows fall across the sunniest spots. You see, my daughter," he added, almost apologetically, "I know a great deal about life. I have *endured* it. I think I could give advice, often, very often, which would

save from much suffering. And so I have made bold to offer to advise you, to warn you. Will you forgive me?"

"How can I forgive you when I do not understand you?" said Alice, who was quite calm now, and who felt that the crucial moment was at hand. "What do you mean? What interest have you to warn me? As you wish plainness of speech, let me help you to it." Here her heart suddenly began beating violently again, as if astonished at its owner's boldness. "You have given me a written warning not to place my affection upon Mr. Pleasant Merrinott. Now, what is he to you? How can it matter to you what he does, or whom he loves? Answer me that, and then we shall comprehend each other better."

The old man sat down by the table, and leaned his elbows on it, shielding his wrinkled face with his two hands.

"The answer," he said, "is simple enough. Three months ago the young Indian was no more to me than any passer in the street might be. But since that time Fate has thrown him in our way. Fate meant him for one of us — and he has joined his fortunes to ours. Do I need to tell you who and what we are?"

"No, you do not! You are conspirators! Misguided, unfortunate people, and you are on the road to ruin!" said Alice, hotly.

"You have said it," responded the old man, meekly. "We are on the road to destruction and ruin, but a ruin out of which we mean to construct a new and a better world."

"Ah! now I see it all!" cried the girl, rising. Her face was quite pale; the lace shawl had fallen from her head, and her excitement lent a lambent, spiritual flame to her beauty. "I see it all! You are the Nihilists, the destructionists, of whom we have heard so much, and you have drawn this innocent young man into your plans, your

plots! And now, what is it that you require? That he should give up his love, his honour, everything, that you may use him as an instrument of your will! Why, sir, I am only a girl, but it seems to me that I can read human nature better than you have read it. Do you think that I will give him up *now*, when what you have told me makes it more than ever my duty to cling to him, to save him? Never!"

"He is no longer his own master," said the old man, who was momentarily becoming more and more the prey of a mystical exaltation. "He is one of us. He is an apostle of vengeance. He is a herald of destruction. He has mighty wrongs to avenge. He has a mission beyond the sea. He cannot retire. If you hold him from his duty you destroy him. Draw back, my daughter, from mysteries that you do not understand. It is yet time. Seek your happiness, your love, elsewhere. Remember Pleasant Merrinott as one whom you have seen in a dream. He is wedded to his work. The die is cast; the word is spoken; he must henceforth be one of those who work to destroy the world — the society that has no future!"

"Sacrilege!" said Alice. "Are you so presumptuous that you do not tremble when you talk of blotting out, of destroying, a society which a God died to redeem!"

The old man was silent for a minute or two. But at last he said, "It would be useless for us to discuss these matters. I should only shock your feelings. Some day, when you hear the clock of destiny strike, you will feel that we have not laboured in vain. But *do* be warned. Believe me; it is because I respect and reverence your youth and beauty and goodness that I have warned you! Turn away, child of fortune that you are, from the thorny path that the chosen ones must tread. The young Indian might, for the sake of your love, prove false to his duty.

If he *should* prove false now, no power on earth could save him; his death warrant would be sealed. If you value his life, turn away from him, and forget him!"

"This is monstrous!" said Alice. "You are criminals! I will not listen to such language! I will have you punished! Do not think that I am afraid! I will leave this place! Bertine!"

The old man arose, and gravely stroked his gray beard. "My child," he said, "you are as free to go as you were to come. No one will raise a hand against you. But do not think that you can injure us. One — two — ten — twenty of us are taken away; others quietly and silently take their places. Believe me, you can do nothing. You are in presence of a superior force. Your momentary interests conflict with its eternal and immutable aims. Yield and retire, before your heart is too deeply engaged. The advice is harsh, but some day you will thank me for it."

"But what do you want to do with him — with Mr. Merrinott?" cried the girl desperately. "What miserable plot have you drawn him into? Why did you not let him attend to his noble mission, of protecting and saving his own race — his down-trodden Indians?"

"He will find greater consolation in greater work — if you will but leave him free to attend to it. Remember, your love will be fatal to him, for it will make him false to his sublime vow."

"My love shall *save* him!" said Alice, drawing her shawl over her head and moving toward the door.

Bertine, with flaming eyes and with pallid cheeks, followed cautiously. She had sprung out from the other room at the cry of her mistress, and was all aglow with exasperation at the patriarch, of whose harangues she had not understood a syllable. The old man took up a candle as if to show them out. Alice's swift gaze photographed upon her memory every detail of his appearance — the face

seamed with wrinkles and scars; the queer white curls in front of each ear; the stubby beard which he had allowed to grow since he had left Switzerland; and the frayed and soiled long coat. He even cringed a bit before her keen eyes.

Just as the venerable conspirator's hand was on the latch, there was a noise on the staircase, the sound of voices approached, and in a moment there was a knock at the door. An ironical smile lighted up the face of Ignatius. "It is better so," he muttered in his native tongue, and motioning Alice and Bertine aside, he threw the door wide open. Advancing a little, he held up the candle so that the light fell full upon the faces of — Pleasant and Vera.

At this instant a most extraordinary revolution took place in Alice's mind. As her determination to save Pleasant had grown under the old man's menaces, her tenderness and affection for him had also increased. But now that she saw him side by side with the woman whom she had from the first suspected as the author of the mischief; now that she saw Vera, with a curious expression of joy and triumph on her face, holding Pleasant's hand in hers, an unaffected and unabashed feeling of rage and contempt gained possession of her. The rage was unreasoning but mighty, and directed against Vera. The contempt was regretful but strong, and fell upon Pleasant.

The new-comers did not see the girls, and, before entering, Vera said, solemnly —

"Great news, brother. I am the chosen one."

In his excitement the old man let the candle drop from his hands, and stood staring admiringly at Vera. Pleasant unclasped Vera's hand from his, and stepped down to pick up the light. The rustling of Bertine's garments caused him to glance hastily at the spot where the girls stood together.

"Alice!" he cried. "Alice! here!"

Vera turned her face slowly toward the girls.

"Strangers here, and at this solemn time," she said. "Ignatius, do you know what risks you incur?" She spoke in English, as she had spoken at first, because Pleasant was with her.

Ignatius began to mutter something about a "good motive," but no one listened, for Alice, wild with excitement, could contain herself no longer. She stepped imperiously to the door, motioning Vera to make way.

"I have seen and heard enough," she said to the old man. "You were right to ask me here. I have learned much. And now, good-bye to each and all of you for ever!"

She was gone, with Bertine fluttering after her — down the stone staircase, into the darkness.

"Alice! Alice!" cried Pleasant, trying to follow her. But the old man fell on his knees before him, and Vera placed her hand on his shoulder, and he stood still. The light faded out of his face. The shadow of the wings of the angel of destruction had fallen upon him.

* * * * * *

Alzor went home as swiftly as he had come, and, as the clock in the library marked half-past eleven, Alice climbed feebly up the stairs to her own rooms. When her mother returned from the opera she listened at the girl's door, and hearing no sound, fancied that she must have long been asleep.

CHAPTER XXIX.

UNDER THE SHADOW AGAIN.

PRESENTLY the old man arose, and stood with bowed head at a little distance from Vera and Pleasant, in the attitude of one who expected a reproof. Vera removed her hand from the young Indian's shoulder, and walked to the window, whence she looked down upon the peaceful, moonlit garden. She was terribly agitated, and was making a great effort to recover her calmness. Pleasant fancied that he could feel his life ebbing away. It seemed to him that in that one minute when Alice's beautiful and haughty face had flashed upon him out of the darkness, he had lived a life-time, had exhausted all his strength and courage. He stood staring at the door through which Alice had disappeared; that was all he felt capable of for the time.

He heard the ticking of a clock in a corner of the adjoining room; and each sound of the pendulum seemed to strike a blow upon his heart. He had lost his love! he had lost his love! — a love that had seemed thrice precious to him since he had learned how freely, how loyally Alice had given him her heart; how she had suffered from his caprices and his neglect; and how horror-stricken and wretched she must now be, if she had learned of his final determination. He had cast away his love to engage in an enterprise which was, perhaps, a bitter and

criminal folly! He had hoped that there might be some means of reconciling his devotion to her with the performance of what he fancied to be his duty to these strange acquaintances — these mysterious artificers of destruction — this virginal priestess of Bakounin, and this ancient mechanic, this builder of engines of upheaval. Tick! tick! The clock's monotonous voice maddened him; his head was heavy, and his brain began to reel.

Vera's voice aroused him. She had regained her nerve now, and in her speech there was a peremptory ring.

"Ignatius!" she said, "how came those women here to-night? Were you mad to expose us in this manner just as we are on the point of success? Explain! Talk the English; let our new brother understand every thing. Speak, man! don't stand twisting your hands like that! We have more important matters to discuss when this is settled."

"There is nothing to settle," said the old man, a little uneasily. "After our brother had entered into a solemn engagement with us, it was my duty to see that he was not drawn away from his work by outside influences. This young girl whom you saw here to-night was an outside influence. I warned her that she must renounce our brother; that now he could devote himself to nothing but the work. She did not heed my first warning; so I wrote to her that if she would come here I would convince her that she must give up all interest in or affection for Mr. Merrinott. Your sudden arrival aided me much. You see that she is convinced!" The old man said these last words in a mocking manner, rendered doubly effective by the slight foreign drawl with which he spoke English.

Pleasant turned fiercely upon him, but Ignatius spread out both hands, and bowed his venerable head lower than before, as if deprecating the idea of a dispute, and absolutely refusing to enter into a quarrel.

"But do you not think that she will betray us? Do you think a young girl who has the courage to come to this place at this hour of the night will not have the presence of mind to expose us — to ruin us — to render all our efforts valueless? Oh, Ignatius, what have you done?" cried Vera.

The Jew went slowly to the door and closed it. He noticed that Pleasant was watching, with wolf-like eagerness, for his answer to this last question. He sat down and rubbed his wrinkled hands together, as if entirely satisfied with his thoughts.

"The girl betray us? Not she!" he replied. "She is the last person in the world to do it. We have nothing more to fear from her."

"Why?" said Vera.

"Because she is a sensible person. Because I have told her of the terrible risks which our new brother would run if she caused him to falter in his work, and because she would rather lose him than to feel that he is in constant danger of losing his life."

Pleasant leaned against the wall of the little room, and folded his arms. He was trapped — caught in the meshes of the conspiracy just at the moment when, in the extremity of his doubt, he had cried out to Alice to save him. And now her very love for him had been turned into a barrier to erect between her and himself! The cunning of the old Nihilist aroused a stern resentment in his mind. But if Alice had really loved him, if her affection had been of that sterling ware which is proof against everything, would she not then and there have sprung to his arms and insisted that he should go away with her? It did not enter his mind for an instant that she could be jealous of Vera — that she could by any remote possibility misunderstand the nature of his relations to the Russian girl. No; he was caught in the

meshes; he must go on now in his pilgrimage towards the mysterious *new world* which the revolutionists expected to evolve out of the ruins of the old and corrupt one. He was beginning to feel like the Jesuit brother, who delivers himself *perinde ac cadaver*, like a very corpse, into the hands of those who are to control him. But he could not deny that his heart ached, and that the vision of Alice was constantly before his eyes.

"Perhaps you are right, brother. The American girl may reflect, because of the danger to —— But did she fully understand that he has bound himself to us — that he is responsible to us — that he is to undertake a mission for us?"

"She understands enough," said Ignatius. "Didn't you hear her parting words? Did she not bid us all good-bye for ever?"

For ever! Pleasant thought of one night on the terrace of Berne, and the kiss that he had placed on Alice's brow, and the music of the waters of the rushing Aar. He thought, too, of the moment when he had clasped her to his breast, and had cried out to her to save him. Now all that was gone by; Alice would learn to hate and despise him; she would shudder with loathing at the very recital of the dream of daring which filled his mind. He looked down at the Russian girl, who had turned to him, as if she expected some outcry, some protest from him, because of the summary nature of Ignatius's proceedings.

"And what have you to say, brother?" she asked, almost sadly.

"You have robbed me of my love," he answered, hoarsely. "I think the new world that we build will have to be mighty fine to compensate me for my loss."

Vera went up to him impulsively, with a strange light in her eyes, and looked at him almost compassionately.

"Do not fancy that you are alone in your sacrifice, brother," she said. "I, too, suffer. I know what it is to love hopelessly. But the fruition of love is forbidden to those of us who look forward to the complete success of the great cause. Love is not for me! love is not for you! The thorns for us, my brother! the thorns! We are now no longer merely human. We are sublimated wills, we are the apostles of the Absolute Idea! we are the pioneers of man's emancipation from tradition! Courage! Remember our motto! 'Let man's will be done!' Courage!"

Pleasant tossed his hair back — he had thrown his hat aside as Alice hurried away — and a scowl was on his bronzed brow. He had aged curiously within two or three days; the intensity of his doubt, of his striving, had left deep marks on his face. Although he was now committed beyond recall to the cause of these extraordinary people, he did not like their ways, and their strange jargon, of which he heard more and more as he became better acquainted with them, annoyed him very much. He was constantly tempted to ask Vera to translate her sentiments into plain language. Even now that her convictions had become his own, he was sensible that there was a wide difference between them, in method of thought, in manner of expression, in everything.

"How is it," he said suddenly, and in a matter-of-fact way, as if he had swept Alice and her love entirely and for ever out of his mind, "that your brother Stanislas never talks about the — the mission in this — this earnest and excited way, like you and Ignatius and the others? Sometimes I think it is not so serious a matter to him as it is to you. The other day, when we were discussing the means to employ in America, there was something almost like a sneer perceptible in his conversation. Is he as much in earnest as the rest of us?"

Vera's face grew so deathly pale that Pleasant was

sorry he had asked the question. "I—I don't know," she stammered, "that I have ever observed anything of the kind. Brother Stanislas is so very much engrossed in his music that perhaps now and then—— But the hour is late, and we must finish our duties. Ignatius, there are police agents about us, as you know, but they can discover nothing, I think." Her voice sank to a whisper. "Remember that I am the chosen one. The news came to-night. When I have waited a suitable time I shall start on the mission. But our young American friend must be on his way first. He shall shock the New World to its centre while we shock the Old World. America and Russia, the two nations that shall lead the way in the great overturning, are the nations which are most ready to build new structures on the ruins that we propose to create. In a few days all the instructions will be at hand. Take care that my clock of destiny is not discovered, and taken from you by these prying French police, before the moment arrives to commit it to my keeping."

The old man rubbed his hands again and looked up at Vera, with a cunning leer on his face. "Ho! ho!" he said, "do you think that I would have risked bringing the clock of destiny into France? Ignatius is not such a fool. When you pass through Switzerland," he added, leaning forward and whispering, "it will be delivered to you. But at present you cannot know by whom; nor can I tell you where it is. Do you but guard it well when once you have it, and let no one take it from you! No living human beings have seen it but Stanislas, and yourself, and myself—and—and the young man," pointing to the Indian.

"Good," said Vera. "There is no danger from any one of us, I am sure. Stanislas sees much of the Russian diplomatic circles in society here, and he would be sure to

warn us if they were to undertake any decided movements against us. As it is now, they can only watch us and suspect us. They will hardly dare to go further. I must sit down for a few minutes, I am so very tired. Mr. Merrinott, will you not rest a bit before we separate for the night?"

Pleasant brought her one of the old-fashioned arm-chairs which stood near the fireplace, and himself sat down in the other which Alice had occupied while she listened to the pleadings of old Ignatius.

Vera faced the moonlight, which was peeping in, as if the artful Russian agents of the "third section" had employed it to watch the conspirators; and, letting her hands fall in her lap, and throwing back her head, she said, dreamily—

"Now I could feel content for the time being, if only our brother here were on his way to America. To think that he is hastening to his duty in the West, while I go to mine in the East; to feel that we two can shake the world; that our humble efforts, our two pairs of arms, can turn the current of society, can destroy tradition, overthrow tyrants and capitalists, fulfil the dream of Bakounin—it fills my heart with joy! I would not have the noblest coronet of the wealthiest European empire in exchange for the mission which has to-day been given to me!" She turned hastily to Pleasant. "What are love, life, caresses, kisses, happy moments, when weighed in the balance with such missions as ours!" she said. "Do you falter now? Would you give up your work of vengeance, of liberation, in exchange for the love of the poor innocent girl who was here a little while ago? No, you are the true stuff of which the disciples of Bakounin are made, and you will show the misguided Americans, who are following in the footsteps of the corrupt Europeans from whom they sprang, that for the followers of Bakounin the world is

but one country, and all peoples are but one nation. Swear to me that you will do it."

"I have given my word," said Pleasant. "There is no need of saying anything more on that subject, I reckon. We must work now — not talk."

"I accept the reproof," said Vera meekly. "But the vision was an inspiring one. Oh, why is not Stanislas here to join in our triumph? He is very negligent lately. Do you think, Ignatius," she added, in a strangely altered voice, "that by any strange circumstance Stanislas could be betrayed into telling our secrets — could be deceived — could — what do you think?"

"I think," said the old man, rising painfully, going to Vera's chair, and placing his wrinkled hand affectionately on her head, "I think that Stanislas loves his life too well, much too well, to tell any of our secrets. Think not so much of Stanislas, my daughter," he added, bending down to her and speaking in their native language; "it may distract you from the mission."

"True, true," said the girl. And a flush stole into her pallid cheeks.

"And now get to your homes," said the old conspirator. "And you, Mr. Merrinott? Are you angry with me for what I have done to-night? Will you keep your word to go and receive your clock of destiny when I tell you where you will find it? Have you given your heart wholly to your work? Do you regret what has happened within the past hour?"

"What is done is done," said Pleasant. "And now it cannot be undone. I have forsworn myself; I have lost my love; I have struck a blow at my honour, in serving you and your cause. You would be right exacting to ask any greater proofs of my devotion to the enterprise."

"Oh! love! honour! pretty, endearing terms!" said the old man. "How much they mean, and yet how little!

How easy it is for the apostles of Bakounin to forswear them! For we steel our hearts, Mr. Merrinott; we must not let them be weak. We must have hearts of Titans if we mean to pull down the world! Heigh ho! my old limbs ache terribly. Leave me, my children, and let me crawl into my bed and rest. Ha! ha! when the November fogs come, and the rheumatism keeps me awake all night, I shall think" — he stood between the chairs of Vera and Pleasant, and stooping, he took their hands in his, — "I shall think of my children of progress, my followers of Bakounin — the one going west with the clock of destiny, the other going eastward with the clock of destiny. Ha! ha! ha! and I shall lie thinking of your journeys, and your troubles and dangers, and longing for the moment when the clocks shall strike, ha! ha! ha! and society shall crumble!"

"Hush!" said Vera, rising hurriedly. "You are less cautious than we are. We shall see you again soon. Stanislas will help me in the movements that I must make. He will provide money and letters. I am to be in Odessa within a month. There is plenty of time. Mr. Merrinott will be at his post in America before that."

"Oh, the earlier the better!" said the Indian.

He bade them good night, and, as he picked up his hat from the floor, he stumbled. This was a confession of weakness which made him angry with himself. He felt as if he had been worsted by Fate, and by the cunning of old Ignatius, who had now separated him permanently from Alice. He went out, and, not far from the corner of the street, a closed carriage was driven rather ostentatiously toward him, and the driver offered his services. Pleasant gave the man his address, jumped into the carriage, threw himself back against the dark cushions, and began to wonder, gloomily, how much help his Cherokees would derive from his new endeavours as a conspirator. He was

so preoccupied with his thoughts that he did not notice that a dark-faced fellow, in a silk cap and a blue blouse, climbed up beside the Jehu on the box before they drove away.

When Pleasant had gone, Vera said to the old man, "Do you not think that that proud-spirited girl will make us trouble? She looked at me to-night as if she wanted to crush me."

"My dear child, she is safe for the present, as I have told you. Pride and fear will prevent her from any interference just now with our plans. But the Indian must leave Paris at once, and must not see her again. I will arrange that. I will be at his lodgings an hour after daybreak. All his enthusiasm is ours now, and we must keep it untainted. Good-night, chosen one."

Vera went home fearlessly through the darkened streets. Perhaps the wine-flushed wanderers, who might have been tempted to pay her too broad compliments, recognized the fact that behind her chaste presence marched the spirit of a sinister and terrible Idea.

CHAPTER XXX.

COLONEL CLIFF REPORTS FOR ORDERS.

"I MUST not forget poor Caro," said Alice, languidly turning over and over in her hands a note which she had just received from Miss Merlin. "I had no idea that her concert was so near at hand."

It was not strange that Alice had taken but small notice of the swift flight of the October days, since the memorable night when she had gone to beard old Ignatius in his conspirators' den. The girl's nature had received a great shock; and for two or three days after she had undergone the sudden revolution in her heart which led her to bid farewell for ever to Pleasant, she went about dazed and silent, brooding over her lost illusions, as she fancied, rather than over her vanished love. The sternness of the girl's indignation at what she conceived to be Pleasant's gross insincerity, his double dealing, and his weakness, seemed to give her strength, so that she did not relapse into illness. Mrs. Harrelston, observing that the young Indian made no more visits to the house, inquired, as discreetly as possible, what her daughter knew about it. Alice answered quietly that Mr. Merrinott would come no more; that she believed he had been called away on urgent business; and showed such determination to say nothing further about him that Mrs. Harrelston at once

joyously concluded that Alice had rejected his overtures, if he had made any serious ones, and that he had decamped, like the savage that he was, without endeavouring to conceal his disappointment and mortification under the cover of a conventional parting call. She questioned Bertine very closely as to the date of Pleasant's last visit, and the period of his final disappearance, but the little maid told such a series of disconnected and improbable tales, and apparently regarded the Indian with such aversion and disfavour, that Mrs. Harrelston placed small reliance on what she said, and little dreamed that Bertine could have given her the whole secret.

Mr. Harrelston was angry when he learned of Pleasant's disappearance. He felt that he had been imposed upon; he trembled lest his "experiment" should prove worse than useless, perhaps fatal, to Alice, now that he on whom its success depended had absconded like a thief in the night. Mrs. Harrelston used her utmost influence to convince him that Pleasant Merrinott was unworthy of the delicate confidence which the banker had reposed in him; that he was a vulgar half-breed, engrossed in the sole occupation of securing all the benefits that he could for his petty race; and that his departure had happily prevented many annoyances, and possible scandal. With feminine eloquence she discoursed upon the evils which might have sprung from the continuation of Alice's passionate attachment for the Indian.

"She will soon forget him," said Mrs. Harrelston; "it was the romantic side of her nature, and not her heart, to which he appealed. Besides, he was tainted with all sorts of social heresies, and as he was so untrained and impulsive that he was capable of almost any folly, I am glad he is well out of our house, and I do not propose to let him enter it again."

The banker acted as if he were convinced of the justice

of his wife's opinions, but in reality he was not. He could not reconcile Pleasant's new departure with the sincerity of character which had been so manifest in the young Indian's self-accusation, and his frank avowal of his affection for Alice in the interview at the bank after his return from Switzerland.

"Any man," thought Mr. Harrelston, "who is willing to confess that he has been a fool, is on the high road to wisdom; and the young Cherokee made his confession early in life. No; he is an enthusiast; he is overweighted just now; he fancies his duties to his race much greater than they really are. I should not be surprised to see him back here again, full of some new whim about his Nation, and apparently unconscious that his sudden changes of mental temperature attract any attention or cause any disturbance. But in the meantime, how fares it with little Alice?" And he watched over his daughter with even more tenderness than he had ever before manifested, comprehending and gratifying her smallest wishes before they were expressed. If she was paler than usual when he returned from business in the evening he overwhelmed himself with reproaches for having allowed his experiment to terminate so abruptly, and was nervous with fear that another illness was at hand. Her mother endeavoured to keep her in company as much as possible, relying upon social excitement completely to dissipate an impression which she regarded as unfortunate. Alice began to think that her father was secretly grieved at the turn affairs had taken, and this seemed to afford her a certain consolation, although she thought herself so offended by the Indian that any openly expressed sympathy for him would have encountered her instant disapproval.

It so happened that the two persons who might have thrown light upon Mr. Harrelston's somewhat bewildered

notions of Pleasant's new freak were both absent from Paris when the banker sought them in pursuit of information. One was Colonel Cliff, who had gone to England on business connected with his Spanish mining company; the other was Stanislas. Mr. Harrelston had met the musician now and then in society the previous season, and he had formed an excellent opinion of him. He had been much impressed with what he had heard from his wife about Vera, the mysterious sister of Stanislas, her possible relations to some vague conspiracy, and her friendship for Pleasant Merrinott. It seemed to him that from Stanislas or the sister he might learn something about the Indian. From Mrs. Merlin, who came into his private office one morning in great haste, to ask his advice upon some matter concerning the lease of her small house, he secured Stanislas's address, and drove to it, on his way home, the same evening. The musician lived in a handsome apartment in a house on the Boulevard Malesherbes, not far from the Church of the Madeleine. But he was not at home; there was no one in, said the *concierge*. Monsieur Stanislas had left for foreign parts, and his sister was in some country town near Paris, but exactly where the *concierge* could not say. Mr. Harrelston was vexed. Had he known that he was in search of the very persons who were most interested for the moment to keep the whereabouts of Pleasant Merrinott a secret from all except themselves, his vexation at his blunder would have been greater than that caused by his failure to find them. He took measures for hearing from his agents in the West in case Master Merrinott suddenly reappeared in the Indian Territory, and was compelled to content himself, for the time being, with this.

So the days had flown, bringing increasing sorrow and gloom for Alice, who had made private inquiries on her own part about the movements of Pleasant and Vera,

because she was constantly haunted by the fear that the Indian might become involved in some terrible and disgraceful tragedy. But she could discover nothing definite. The old Jew had disappeared from Paris, although he still retained his lodgings. Vera and Stanislas were gone, and Pleasant was — where? There was a postscript to Caro's note about Stanislas. Alice had not seen it at first, as she turned the page, but now she read it hastily, in the hope that it might offer some clue to the movements of the conspirators. "Stanislas," wrote Caro, "has not been near us for ten days, but now we have a note from Germany to say that he will be at the concert. I have sent that singular personage, Mademoiselle Vera, a ticket, but as I have had no answer from her, I fancy she must be more than usually occupied with her medical studies. Alice, we shall find out yet what that young woman is up to; and you take my word for it, it won't be anything very good. And where's Mr. Merrinott, the base bronze deceiver, who promises to call and never calls? I have not seen him since that afternoon when I met him at your house."

Alice was standing in the library as she slowly deciphered Caro's faintly pencilled and straggling chirography. She was dressed for an afternoon round of calls with her remorseless mamma, who insisted that she required diversion. But she was to have some time alone before her mother would be ready; and she had already begun to lose all sense of the flight of the minutes in a mournful reverie, through which the figure of Pleasant Merrinott moved with the misty unsubstantiality of a ghost. She put the note in her pocket, and, sitting down at the huge carven desk, ornamented with ivories and bronzes, began to write to Caro, to assure her anew that she would be present, with her friends, to encourage her *début*. As she placed the blotter on the first page she

heard the bell ring in the hall, and she nervously pushed the paper aside and leaned back in the chair. She never heard the bell ring now without sudden apprehension of evil tidings — she could not explain why.

The servant brought in a tiny English card with Colonel Cliff's name upon it, and as Alice arose the Colonel's pleasant face appeared at the door. It chanced that they had not met since Alice's sorrowful loss of her illusions. The girl was glad to see him; he seemed to offer temporary relief from her thoughts.

"We heard that you were in London, Colonel," she said. "Your absence has caused a decided consternation in the Rue de Presbourg, where you had promised to superintend Mrs. Van Allyn's tableaux; do you not remember?"

"I know, I know, Miss Harrelston; but those Spanish mines are such dreadful tyrants! Business is a foe to social engagements. Have you quite recovered from your illness? I fancied you were looking pale and — and very thoughtful when I stepped in; but I think it was the dimness of the light in the room. November is at hand — and the clouds are thick to-day. Don't let me delay you an instant if you are going out." The Colonel paused between each of his commonplace remarks, as if it caused him great pain to say any thing at all, and Alice was a bit surprised to see that he was confused and ill at ease.

"Colonel Cliff," she said gaily, "I am quite well. I am not going out for an hour, and you are very kind to come and waste that hour with me. I have been writing to Miss Merlin about her *début*. Let me see, this is Thursday; it will take place on Friday evening. Shall I add a postscript to say that you are certain to be there?"

"Most decidedly. If it were only for the pleasure of

having a moment's chat with you in your box, I would go," said the Colonel, laying his hat and gloves aside, and seating himself in an arm-chair near the desk.

Alice could look down from the high chair in which she was seated into his face, which, although marked a trifle here and there by the hand of time, was handsome and impressive. As the conversation proceeded, his confusion vanished, and gave place to rather more resolution than Alice had usually remarked in his demeanour. He looked like a man who had made up his mind to do something decisive. And he had.

"I have called in vain on half a dozen people this afternoon," he said. "All out. Even your father was not in his office. I had something to communicate to our friend Mr. Merrinott, but he has been gone from Paris for many days, I learn. Rather mysterious in his movements, Mr. Merrinott is. He changes his address frequently, and it was only by rallying him when we met that I could get him to tell me where his new abode was. Nomadic instincts inherited, I suppose. Indian blood, and all that."

"Yes," said Alice, displaying the tips of two daintily-shod and tiny feet as she whirled the library chair around, "he has vanished. I suppose his Indians have claimed him again. Perhaps he has gone into a corner to brood over their wrongs. Or perhaps he was only a wraith?" There was a mischievous flash of seeming merriment out of her brilliant eyes as she added, "Do you think he was *real*? Might he not have been a phantom?"

"Well, hardly," said Colonel Cliff, laughing. "He was a solid reality, and a dangerous one, some years ago, when I was compelled to interfere with my soldiers to keep him out of a fight. I suspect he has gone home to nourish his feud. Those border men are incorrigible. But did he

come to say no farewells — after all the kindness that has been shown ——"

The Colonel stopped, half afraid that he had been indiscreet. Yet for the fulfilment of his purpose it was absolutely necessary to know whether or not the Indian had made a lasting impression on Alice's heart.

"Never a farewell said he," answered the girl. "He was gone, like an apparition. I suppose some day we shall read of him in a great border war, and then we shall be proud of having known such a celebrity."

Evidently this was not the manner in which Alice would speak of the Indian if she loved him. The Colonel became convinced that the moment had arrived for the execution of his plan. He had returned from London decided, if he were not warned by some sign that it was absolutely useless, to ask Alice Harrelston to be his wife. His prospects, thanks to a lucky speculation, were brilliant; he knew that he was esteemed by Alice's family; the Indian appeared to have taken himself out of the way; and there, in the library chair before him, sat the sweetest, loveliest girl he had ever seen. His first wife, a fretful young creature, whom he had married in a Western village where he had been stationed, and who had lived to vex him with constant complaints only a year, had left but a shadowy memory. Indeed, her image seemed to fade away entirely now that he looked again on Alice Harrelston, with her gentle, low brow, her olive cheeks, her thin, passionate lips, and her perfect eyes. In the light of those eyes he felt that he could be happy always. His courage increased momentarily; he had arrived at the proper moment — he was to be the victor. Joy! His voice shook with emotion as he continued the conversation.

"I hope Mr. Merrinott will confine himself to legitimate work for his own people," he said, "and then he could do

nothing which we might not praise, even if we disagreed with it. But I must still confess to a lurking fear that those clever Russian plotters have turned his head. He would go into the maddest of enterprises and lose his life gladly if he thought there were a kind of duty in it. I took occasion to find out about Mademoiselle Vera, whom you met in Switzerland, and what do you think I discovered? Why, that she is one of the most determined of the wretched gang of the apostles of destruction."

Alice smiled bitterly. What could he tell her that she did not know?

"You remember we fancied that it might be a mere coincidence of names, and——"

Colonel Cliff heard a door hastily opened, and sprang up in alarm, as he saw a mortal whiteness invade the cheeks of Alice. His first thought was that the adventurous Indian might have returned in time to defend his reputation; but, looking around, he saw no one but the little maid, Bertine, with terror written on her usually placid countenance.

"Will you excuse me a moment, Colonel," said Alice, rising, and moving to the door.

While he murmured "Certainly," a fear that something had occurred to blast his happiness, to ruin his projects, stole into his mind. The wrinkles in his forehead seemed to grow deeper, and grays crept into his cheeks. If he lost Alice, he would lose the last remnants of his youth!

Bertine caught her young mistress tightly by the arm, as Alice stepped into the hall, and, placing a letter in the girl's trembling hands, drew her, unresisting, away from the stairway into a corner, and whispered —

"It's another. It was not the old man who brought it, but it is from them. It was a young man. He appeared at my elbow as I stood in the garden. 'Take this

to Mademoiselle Harrelston,' he said, 'and mind you give it to no one else.' And, b-r-r-r-r! he was gone."

Alice glanced at the envelope. The superscription was in English. "To Mademoiselle Alice Harrelston," and then followed the address, and these words, "To be delivered in ten days." The letter had been written ten days ago. Alice tore it open, and read—

"When you receive this I shall be so far away that, even if my own heart were weak enough to ask me to go back to you, I could not reach you until you will have forgotten, after having, I hope, forgiven, me. I know that my conduct has seemed to you inexcusable, may be insincere, at any rate culpable. I did not know myself; and when I asked you to save me, it was because I went with hesitation and trembling toward the mission which I have now imposed upon myself. I reckon you do not care to have me explain to you what that mission is. Old Ignatius, in his anxiety to separate you from me, must have given you some hint of its general character.

"But I must tell you, now that it is too late, that if you had called to me, if you had given me word or look or sign, if you had commanded me, on that night when we last met, I would have followed you anywhere and done anything for you. For I love you—and can love but you, and I would have renounced the mission—my race and its regeneration—everything—for you! I have never dreamed or thought of any other than you since I held you in my arms at the cañon there in the mountains, after the big stone had come so near to crushing you.

"Perhaps it would have been better—a powerful sight better—for me to have stayed by you and won your love, and worn it like the pearl of great price that it is; but somehow I could not reconcile that with my notions of my duty—until it was—— And so now, good-bye. Forget that I ever existed, for hereafter my life belongs

only to the companions whom I have voluntarily chosen. My thoughts are all for the doctrine to which I have given myself — after grave doubts and many delays, it is true, — but definitely at last. I do not tell you where I go; and do not try to find out. Forgive — forget. Good-bye.

"P. M."

Alice crushed the missive in her right hand, and looked up, with hot tears in her eyes, but with a proud resolution on her lovely face. Her lips trembled, but she felt that she was still mistress of her emotions. "Not find out where he has gone!" she whispered. "I *will* know, if he is on earth. I will find him, and *save* him yet. And as for that woman — that mad Russian creature who has bewitched him with her wicked doctrines, she shall tell me where he is, or she shall —— ! I knew he could not love *her*. I felt that he was true — and yet I doubted!"

"Mademoiselle is crying!" said Bertine dolefully. "Has something dreadful happened?"

"No, Bertine; good news, glorious news!" and she felt like adding, "He loves me; he has never been false to me!" but she made a great effort to be calm. "*Ecoute!*" * she said, "Bertine; watch here and let me know when mamma is about to come downstairs. Do you understand?"

"Oh, Mademoiselle, she will not be ready for half an hour yet. She is in the very midst of her pins! I will watch."

Alice dried her eyes, and went back to the library, her mind concentrated on a great resolve. Her romantic and impulsive nature was now thoroughly aroused; she was capable of daring, of heroic deeds. The Colonel was sitting just where she had left him, but with his head bowed forward and his eyes staring into space. He had

* Listen.

taken up one of his gloves and was idly swinging it back and forth. He did not hear her come in; he was absorbed in the contemplation of the saddest spectacle that man ever looks upon — the departure of his last illusion. A mysterious presentiment told him that he had hoped in vain — that Alice Harrelston was not for him.

He started, and his face lighted up as he heard the girl's rustling robes once more beside him. Alice sat down in the chair at the desk, and looked at him so strangely, that he arose.

"I am afraid I am intruding," he said. "Has anything — is there any — thing ——"

"Colonel Cliff," said Alice, "what would you say if I asked you to do me a great — oh, a very great service — something for which I could never hope to repay you?"

"The only serious object which I have in life, Miss Harrelston," said the Colonel, a trifle gloomily, "is to be of service to you. In fact, if I might be allowed to devote my whole life to —— I came to-day to tell you ——"

His heart sank within him. Alice did not seem to hear his stammering hints at declaration.

"Colonel," she said, rising, and speaking huskily, while the tears came back to dim her eyes, "I am afraid your worst fears have been realized about — about Mr. Merrinott. There seems good proof that he has been drawn into a plot by the Russians of whom we were speaking the other day. He has gone — on some wild mission in which he will lose his life or his honour. Colonel, I want to ask you if you will help me to find him, and save him?" It was said sweetly; her eyes were downcast, and a faint blush tinged her cheeks. "To save him," she continued, "from himself. And the first thing to do is to find that Russian girl Vera, and to *make* her tell where he has gone. Oh! if I were a man! *I* would make her tell. Will you find her

this very day, if she is in Paris, Colonel Cliff, and make her tell the truth?"

"I will," he answered, after a minute's reflection. It takes at least a minute for the best of men unselfishly to put away his heart's fondest desire. "I will; consider me as on duty for you in this matter. Use me as you will. The first thing, then, is to find Mademoiselle Vera — and make her tell where Mr. Merrinott is?"

"Do you think you can do it?" said Alice eagerly. "And remember — not a word to my parents — to any one."

"I think I know a way to make her speak," he said. "But it may be a little difficult. I will do my best, and to-morrow morning I will report to you for orders. I shall hardly have accomplished anything before that time. And, if you will excuse me, I will take my leave at once, as I may find still at his office a certain diplomat who usually keeps well informed about this person Vera's movements. Count on me, Miss Harrelston, count on me absolutely."

He held out his hand; it trembled a little. Alice looked up at him as she gave him hers. She was somewhat surprised at an indefinable change in his voice and manner — but he was, if possible, more kindly and courteous than ever.

"You can never know how grateful I am for your aid," she said.

He let her hand fall, and took up his hat and made her a military bow. He felt like an officer going on an important secret mission on which life depended.

"I will do my best," he said.

At that moment Bertine, dismayed at finding that she had miscalculated the time which it would take Mrs. Harrelston to complete her toilette, opened the door, and signalled desperately to Alice that her mother would be

down in a moment. So Alice rather expedited the good Colonel's departure. He went his way, feeling that the sun had lost its brightness for him; and Alice, seated at the writing-desk, was calmly finishing her note to Caro when Mrs. Harrelston came in, equipped for her afternoon visits.

CHAPTER XXXI.

UNMASKING.

CARO threw aside the little calendar at which she had been looking, and clambered out of the old leathern arm-chair with a doleful expression on her resolute young face. "The twentieth of October, and Thursday; there is no doubt about it!" she said. "And that means that to-morrow will be the twenty-first, and that I must make my *début* on a Friday! How strange that I should never have thought of this before! Now if I were superstitious ——!" She threw a shawl over her shoulders, and went up to the balcony in the roof.

It was quite dark, and the autumn evening was cool. A capricious wind that had come from the sea-coast, and had brought the perfume of the ocean on its wings, was hanging about the heights of Montmartre, making the loose tiles on the houses rattle, and filling the small groves of horse-chestnuts, acacias, and sycamores in the gardens with quaint moanings and sighings. There was a prophecy of November damps and fogs in the air. In the vast city below, myriads of lights were shining out of the shadows in all directions and twinkling like stars. Caro amused herself for a minute with the fancy that they resembled constellations in some firmament above which she had mounted.

"To-morrow night, when I come up from the theatre," she said aloud, as she leaned on the balcony railing and gazed at the millions of tiny flames which marked the almost countless abodes of the dwellers below, "to-morrow — shall I have won victory or defeat down there?"

The wind came to toy with her hair and to tug at her shawl, as if to divert her attention from her fears for the morrow. But she did not heed it. "If I fail," she continued, "I shall never wish to see that sight again!" and she indicated Paris and its lights with a sweeping gesture. "I should feel like a general looking at a fortress which he has failed to conquer! And where is Stanislas? *Why* doesn't he come?"

Caro had been watching for some days for the arrival of Stanislas from Germany, whither he had gone, as he told her, on a professional journey, a certain high-tempered Teutonic *impresario* having threatened him with an action for damages, and a variety of disagreeable correspondence in the newspapers, if the musician persisted in breaking his engagement with him, as he had done with so many others since his passionate declaration to Caro on the house-top in the Rue de l'Orient. The time fixed for the return was long past, and Caro was oppressed with anxiety lest Stanislas should not come back in time to be present at her *début*. There were phases of his conduct, latterly, which her reason could not explain, but which her affection was resolved to pardon.

Stanislas was evidently ill at ease, and there were moments when he seemed haunted by a vague dread of some shadowy danger. There was a furtive look in his eyes, and the enthusiastic gaiety usually so characteristic of him appeared wholly subdued. For a day or two before his departure for Germany he had answered Caro's questions with an absent and preoccupied air, and once — but once only — when he was advising her concerning a pas-

sage in an aria, he manifested real petulance. The girl was astonished, and felt certain that the hidden griefs or cares, of which these things were the outward manifestations, had some mysterious relation to the eccentric career of his "sister," or the girl whom he called his sister, Vera. Too loyal to take any secret measures for discovering the exact nature of the relations between Stanislas and Vera, Miss Merlin had contented herself as best she could, up to the time of the musician's absence, with Colonel Cliff's explanation of Vera's probable aims, and with Stanislas's occasional mentions of her as "well-meaning, but eccentric," or as "half crazy over philosophy and medicine." She had had no chance for an outpouring of all her hopes, her love and her suspicions, to Alice; she would have been glad of an opportunity, but Alice, who "nursed her deep wound in her silent breast," thought that she had the best of reasons for avoiding intimate conversation with the young Western girl.

A swallow flew circling around Caro's head three or four times as she turned away from the balcony's edge to go downstairs, and in the small bird's weird cry there was, as it seemed to her excited spirit, a kind of foreboding of evil. She shuddered, and went down to the study-room, where, seated at the piano and listlessly evoking idle melodies, she waited for the much-desired coming of Stanislas. Joined to the impatience of the lover was now a mysterious and scarcely-defined displeasure. But Caro would not, *could* not, visit it upon the musician alone. What if his strange sister — his queer *protégée*, Vera, had got him into trouble with her silly plots!

"I declare!" she said aloud, jumping up and looking for her hat, "I am half inclined to go to the place where they live, and if I can see Mademoiselle Vera, to ask for an account of her brother's movements. Perhaps she will deign to explain, too, why she has not acknowledged the

ticket which I sent her for the concert to-morrow night. I will go! I cannot sleep until I know whether *he* is to be here then!"

Ten minutes later Caro, modestly robed in black, slipped out of the house and through the little garden into the street. Her mother was waiting patiently at a dressmaker's, in the Faubourg Saint Honoré, for the last touches to the concert dress for the morrow. Good Mrs. Merlin would not rely on the man-milliner's promises to send the sacred garment at an early hour the next morning, and had grimly determined to see it completed and in her possession some time before midnight. The girl felt a little timid as she went down the Rue Lepic alone, but presently she hailed a passing carriage, and shortly before nine o'clock she arrived without adventure at the door of the handsome mansion in the Boulevard Malesherbes where Stanislas and his "sister" Vera resided. The tenant of the porter's lodge, a fat and fluffy old man of indolent disposition, did not even take the trouble to look at her as he answered her faltering inquiry whether Monsieur Stanislas had yet returned from Germany. He was having his dinner all alone at a small round table, and his back was turned to Caro. He took his soup-spoon out of his mouth, and answered, very tartly, "I don't know any thing about your Germany; but if you want Monsieur Stanislas, you will find him in his room — sixth floor, first door on the right. You must knock; some one pulled down the bell-cord yesterday, and I have no time to put it up."

He went on grumbling and eating, while Caro, into whose cheeks a rosy colour had sprung, went slowly up the first flight of stairs, trying to persuade herself that it was not proper to call on the musician now that he had come home. Why had he not flown to find her? Her faint mistrust began to assume a definite form, and it made her

heart ache. No! she would ask for Vera; and then he would hasten to her — he would explain, and all would be well.

The apartment occupied by the musician, at the top of the house, was what is known in Paris as a *terrasse;* that is, it possessed a large and handsome balcony, decorated with flowers and vines, and as there was no storey save that in the Mansard roof above it, it had the merit of affording that comparative seclusion so precious to the dwellers in great cities. The *terrasses* usually rent for rather more money than the two floors below, because they are preferred.

Caro found the door on the right open, and she saw a dimly-lighted ante-chamber, richly-furnished with carpets and carved wooden chairs, and a curious cabinet littered with books, sheets of music, and bric-a-brac. There was an odour of delicately perfumed oriental tobacco in the air. The girl knocked stoutly once — twice, and stood almost breathless, and a trifle flushed, hoping that the servant would speedily appear. But no one came. Again she knocked; still no answer. She glanced at the bell-cord; it was broken, as the *concierge* had said. One more knock. The strange silence terrified her. What if there had been a disaster, a crime within?

Hardly realizing what she was doing, she stepped into the ante-chamber, her footsteps falling noiselessly on the thick carpets, and moved toward the open door of a large room at the left. Just as she had decided not to enter there, but to beat a hasty retreat, she heard the sound of voices, — evidently in a room fronting on the street, — and a moment afterward the musician's familiar tones. The awkwardness of her position was clearly apparent to her, and she flitted into the room on the left, and took refuge behind a tall and ample old-fashioned screen in a corner, just as Stanislas strode forward to close the outer door of the apartment. Then she heard him return to his com-

panion, and she was a little surprised to hear him say in English —

"Do you not think it would be better to step in from the balcony? If she were to catch a glimpse of you from the street, she might not come up; she is exceedingly *méfiante** lately."

"And not without reason, one might almost say," was the rejoinder, in a voice which sounded curiously familiar to Caro, but which she was too terrified and perplexed readily to recognize. She discovered that the screen was not far from a door — concealed by two thick curtains — which opened into what was probably the drawing-room; and every word of the conversation reached her distinctly. What should she do? Should she venture forth, and try to regain the outer door without attracting notice? What apology could she offer if her lover found her escaping from his lodgings? Fortunately, there was a chair behind the screen; she sank into it, in doubt as to which made the most noise, the beating of her heart or the rustling of her dress; and she determined not to stir from her concealment until she were a little more composed.

The faint notes of a piano reached Caro's ears. She could picture the young musician, in her fancy, seated at the instrument as he talked with his visitor, letting his shapely hands stray to and fro along the keys, now striking a chord to emphasize his remark, now caressing the ivory as if he loved it and thought it received pleasure from his touch.

"I am bound to tell you," said Stanislas to his companion, "that I am entirely ignorant of Mr. Merrinott's whereabouts. The poor American! To think that he should be distracted by ——." He struck the keys impetuously, bringing forth jarring discord. "When Vera comes in you can ask her, but I doubt if she will answer

* Suspicious.

you. Do you know I am not sorry that you are here. I shall be pleased to have a witness of something that I myself have to say to Vera. I hope you will not think it very strange, but perhaps it will be a new phase of European life for you to contemplate."

"I confess that it would require something strikingly novel to astonish me," said the visitor. "Every-day life in Europe certainly affords capital chances for the study of the romantic. But, to be serious, Monsieur Stanislas, nothing has puzzled me more than your relation to this singular, and, if you will allow me to say so, this abominable conspiracy. How and what you can expect to gain by it I am at a loss to discover. As a wise brother, you ought to have discouraged Mademoiselle Vera's *rôle* in it long ago; and as an artist, a man of genius, I cannot conceive how the vulgarity of the plot has not offended your æsthetic sense."

Stanislas laughed uneasily, and answered, "You will not have to wait long for the solution of the riddle, and I trust that you will not judge my action too harshly."

"Very well," said the other. "I will wait. But remember that the main object of my visit is to learn in which direction Pleasant Merrinott has been sent by these misguided people, and that I shall spare no effort to learn this. If you could counsel your sister not to be stubborn, it might be ——. Once or twice I have heard you speak as if you were anything rather than sympathetic for the conspiring disciples of Bakounin."

"You have given me your word that you will wait," said Stanislas. "Hush! there is her key in the lock now. She is punctual as the sun."

Caro started up from her chair, for she heard the well-remembered voice of Vera. That mystical personage was, however, saying nothing extraordinary. She merely gave directions to some one who had accompanied her to set

various parcels in a corner of the ante-chamber, thanked him gracefully in French, closed the door after him, and then Caro heard her pass lightly through the room, and so near the screen that her dress brushed against it.

"She has gone to her own apartments," said Stanislas to his visitor in a low tone. "Be ready, please, to be presented at once when she comes in here."

Then there was a long silence. Caro had seated herself again, and exercised her will vigorously to restrain her longing to overturn the screen and to escape hastily from the apartment. Presently she heard the rustle of robes; the curtain concealing the entrance to the room in which the musician and his visitor sat was pushed aside, and Vera had evidently entered. This is what Caro would have seen, had she ventured forth from her hiding place:—

The Russian girl was dressed in black, and wore no ornament of any description. Her wavy, chestnut hair was no longer worn in masculine fashion, but was combed smoothly down and parted in the middle. The sternness of her face seemed to have been softened; instead of the sinister look so often there one could now perceive only the shimmering flame of an exalted enthusiasm. As she came forward so that the light from the lamp on the piano fell fully upon her, the musician's visitor arose. Vera stepped hastily backward.

"I beg pardon," she said in French. "I had understood that brother Stanislas would be alone this evening——"

"You may speak in English, Vera," said Stanislas, drumming faintly on the piano. "This gentleman is my friend, Colonel Cliff. I believe you have never met before, although you have often heard of each other—in the mountains—do you not remember?"

Vera gave the good Colonel a look which seemed to penetrate his very soul. Then she stepped forward and offered him her hand, after which she took the hand which

Stanislas extended, and held it for an instant in both her own, then let it fall. It was done so gracefully, and with such an air of reverence, that the Colonel fancied it might be some Russian custom, which he now saw for the first time.

"A friend of those charming people, the Harrelstons, is it not? — at least, I think so," said Vera, apparently finding some slight difficulty in getting her thoughts into English harness, but, when they were once in, conducting them with admirable ease, "and of that sweet little singer, Miss Merlin. How is it that I did not have the pleasure of seeing you in Switzerland, Col-o-nel?" inquired Vera. All the time that she was talking she was studying both Stanislas and the Colonel, and not one of their slightest gestures escaped her attention.

"I am sorry that we did not meet in the mountains," he said vaguely, and with somewhat embarrassed air. He was thinking that his mission might be rendered fruitless — unless he conducted it very skilfully — by the phenomenal self-possession and wariness of this remarkable young woman, who inspired him for the moment with both curiosity and awe. "I had separated from my friends before they had the pleasure of meeting you."

"That was a misfortune for them, as for me," said Vera, looking straight into his eyes. She was trying to discover whether Alice had told him of her visit to the abode of old Ignatius. She saw at once that the Colonel was a man of energy and decision, and that he was likely to prove her match. "We were quite merry for a short time in Berne," she added. "I like Americans; they are not stiff, and formal, and — and — they are original. The Indian, Mr. Merrinott — I fancy you know him, Col-o-nel? Ah! he was exceedingly original. Perhaps your friends have told you of the curious wager that we made."

"It was to ask us a question about Mr. Merrinott that

Colonel Cliff called on us this evening," interrupted Stanislas, bending down to a pile of music books at his right hand, and taking up one carelessly.

"Yes," said the Colonel, rising and stepping briskly forward so that he stood between Vera and Stanislas. "I have taken the liberty of calling, at the request of a friend, to ask you" — and he turned quietly to Vera — "if you will be good enough to inform us of the present whereabouts of the young Indian."

Vera sat down on a sofa and smoothed out the folds in her black dress. Then she answered tranquilly, "I saw a good deal of Mr. Merrinott for a time. He was very interesting and sympathetic. But for the last ten days I have not seen him."

"Well," said Colonel Cliff, as quietly as if he were reciting a fact which was current news, "knowing that you were instrumental in sending him on his mission, I thought it but natural that you should be able to tell me in what direction he had gone." He started, for Vera had sprung to her feet, and approached him with a dangerous whiteness in her face.

"So the American girl has betrayed us!" she said, proudly raising her head and looking at the Colonel with flashing eyes.

"Not at all," answered Colonel Cliff. "You have betrayed yourself."

"Monsieur does not make his meaning clear."

"But I will do so," said the Colonel. "You will have nothing to lose by telling me where Mr. Merrinott has gone, that I may take measures for restoring him to his friends before it is perhaps too late to prevent him from committing a crime. Let me speak with perfect plainness. By utter frankness now I may be able to save you from ruin. Mademoiselle, your plans, your conspiracy, your secret aims are all known; your accomplices in Russia and

Germany are in the hands of the police, and those stationed here are surrounded by such a network of governmental weaving that they cannot make a decided movement without danger to themselves. And as for you, Mademoiselle, the only reason that you have not been expelled adroitly from France so as to fall into German hands, from which you would be delivered to the tender mercies of the Russians, is to be found in the intervention of a single person."

The Colonel had seen many piteous sights in his time, but never anything so worthy of supreme pity as the Russian girl's face when he uttered these last words. He turned away for an instant. Vera moved and terrified him.

She tried to speak, but the words choked in her throat. For a minute or two she stood mutely gazing, first on Stanislas, then on the Colonel, as if incapable of fully comprehending the cruel yet earnest words which announced the ruin of her hopes. At last she found her voice. Advancing to the piano, she stretched out her hand, asking feebly —

"And who — is the person who has been gracious enough to interfere in my behalf?"

"Why, there he sits!" said the Colonel, turning, with a flash of scorn in his eyes, and pointing to Stanislas.

"*He* knows it, then, and has been playing with me!" muttered the musician, quitting his seat and glancing quickly around him. "Ah! Monsieur, you might have spared me this!"

He heard a faint cry in the adjoining room, and it almost stopped the beating of his heart. Was the avenger already at hand?

Vera seemed to possess wonderful strength and composure. Her voice trembled, but her eyes were dry, as she said, "I do not understand you. Do you mean Stanislas?"

"Yes. Your brother." Despite the compassion which the Colonel felt for the poor girl's woful plight, he could not refrain from laying a slightly malicious emphasis on the word *brother*. He felt that now he should have an explanation of the strange relations of this singular pair.

"My *brother!* Since you seem to know everything that concerns us, I suppose you have discovered that he is not my brother. Oh, Stanislas! What have you done?"

"Be calm, Vera," said the musician, whose face was now whiter than the girl's. "You will understand all in time. You will see that I was bound — that I was compelled — that I wished to save you from yourself ——"

She interrupted him with a hoarse cry, followed by a dozen words in a language which neither the Colonel nor Caro understood. Then she turned to Colonel Cliff and addressed him in English again. The resistless and overwhelming manner in which the wave of her passion mounted to her brain alarmed him. He feared that some great tragedy might suddenly spring from this white heat.

CHAPTER XXXII.

VERA IN THE TOILS.

"*My brother!*" repeated the girl, with a strange commingling of sorrowful reproach and scorn in her tones. "The man in whom I believed as I believed in nothing else on earth!"

She gazed steadfastly at the musician for a few moments, as if she expected him to defend himself, to cry out, to come to her side, and to tell her that it was all a horrible dream. But, seeing that he had reseated himself at the piano, and was looking down rather confusedly at the white keys, she staggered back to the sofa, sat down, took a handkerchief from her pocket and wiped her lips with it. The Colonel's quick eyes saw that it was stained with blood.

"You are ill!" he cried. "Be calm; there is nothing to fear; it is dangerous to excite yourself. Can I help you?"

She arose, and the old mystical, exalted look came over her face. "No," she answered, huskily. "If you wish to aid any one, help *him*." And she pointed to the musician. "But all the medical skill in Paris — all the doctors in Europe — could not save him now. He is a dead man."

Stanislas struck heavily with one hand on the piano, bringing out a harsh discord, and sprang up. "Do not

listen to her foolish talk," he said to Colonel Cliff. "She is ill — she raves when she is in that excited state. We shall have her in convulsions directly! Vera, you are angry with me now; but when you have had time to reflect, when you see what I have saved you from, you will thank me."

A spasm contracted the girl's face. There was a faint gurgling in her throat, and again she pressed the handkerchief to her lips. But now she kept her eyes tightly fixed upon Stanislas, as if she were afraid to lose sight of him even for an instant. He came up to her and tried to take her hands in his, but she dexterously moved around an arm-chair, so that it stood between him and herself.

"I am glad this American gentleman is here as a witness! I wish him to hear what I have to say," continued the musician. "Vera! it was all a dream from the first — a noble, bewitching, golden dream — if you like — but without the smallest chance of realization."

"Of what are you speaking?" said the girl, making a desperate effort to control the nervous twitching of the muscles of her cheeks.

"Of what am I speaking? Why, of the Nihilist revolution — the grand Pan-destruction which you have dreamed of night and day, ever since I first met you in Moscow and heard you tell the pathetic story of your parents' exile to Siberia. You drew me into it so prettily, with your splendid enthusiasm and your fine reasoning, that I was committed before I knew where I was. Ah! Bakounin was right when, in his 'Revolutionary Catechism,' he said, 'The most precious helpers in the work are women who are completely initiated and who accept our entire programme. Without their aid we can do nothing.' He had a subtle mind — this Bakounin — and he knew that with this aid his disciples could do everything. Bah! you had made me a conspirator before I knew that I had talked

with you about anything more serious than music. A conspirator! I — a boy musician. It makes me smile when I remember it!"

"Stanislas," said the girl, "your voice comes to me as from the dead. Remember that for me you exist no longer. You have signed your own death warrant. What you may say or do now can have no importance."

"*Pas si vite!*" * cried the musician, impatiently stamping his foot on the carpet. "I am not dead yet, if you please, and I know perfectly well what I am saying. You shall hear me out! I am not afraid of the assassins of the society." Yet his voice wavered, and he glanced around hurriedly as he said these last words. "I shall have protection. I will not be dictated to by these all-destroying fiends."

Vera smiled scornfully. "You have just quoted," she said, "from Bakounin's 'Revolutionary Catechism.' Do you remember his definition of his idea of the Revolutionist? Let me repeat it for you."

She coughed faintly; then, folding her hands and closing her eyes, she spoke the following sentences slowly and impressively: "'The Revolutionist is a devoted man. He must have neither personal interests, nor affairs, nor sentiments, nor property. He must allow himself to be absorbed entirely into a single exclusive idea, one sole thought — one passion — the Revolution! He has but one aim; he knows but one science — destruction. For that, and for *nothing but that*, he must study mechanics, physics, chemistry, and sometimes medicine. He must observe, for the same end, men, characters, positions, and all the conditions of the social order. He must despise and hate the present moral code. For him everything is moral which favours the triumph of the Revolution; everything is immoral and criminal which hinders it. Between

* Not so fast.

him and society the war is to the knife, incessant, irreconcilable. He must prepare himself to die, to support torture, and to slay with his own hands all who place obstacles in the path of the Revolution!'"

She grasped the back of the chair for support with one hand, and with the other held her handkerchief to her mouth a moment, then let it fall to the floor. Stanislas again approached her, but she motioned him away. "I did not think," she said, "that it would ever be my fate to become one of your executioners. You! Stanislas! false! you, my only love! The man whom I adored, loved, cherished, as if he were a demi-god!" She said something more, but so faintly that the Colonel could not tell whether it were uttered in English, French, or Russian; then she swayed around and sank down, breathing heavily.

"Vera! little one, my love, forgive me!" cried the musician, springing forward to raise her from the floor.

Just as he was about to touch her he recoiled, with an ashy pallor on his cheeks. There was a loud noise, as of the fall of a heavy body in the next room, and then the sound of lightly flying footsteps. The outer door was opened and closed, and all was still again.

"See — what it is — what it was," muttered Stanislas, pointing with trembling hand to the door of the dining-room, and Colonel Cliff obeyed his injunction.

"A screen has fallen over," he said, peeping into the room. "And I thought I heard some one retreating. Do you fancy ——"

The musician had placed Vera upon the sofa, and stood looking down at her. He had recovered his self-control now, and Colonel Cliff could not help thinking that there was a grim smile of triumph on his face as he contemplated the suffering woman.

"This is not a very severe convulsion," he said. "She

will come out of it without help. Let me see if I can find her another handkerchief." He placed his hand lightly in the pocket of the girl's skirt, and drew forth half a dozen small, daintily perfumed squares of linen. "Poor thing!" he said. "I have sometimes seen her saturate as many as there are here with the blood from her lungs. There is a fan on the piano. Would you mind handing it to me? Thanks. Now — that right hand is clenched too tightly. Oh, that will never do! We must rub it a little. So! While the good Colonel swings the fan. Aha! at last she opens her eyes."

She did indeed open them, but as if upon another world, for her gaze was full of mystery. She seemed to see things unearthly, inexplicable, grand. Although Stanislas knelt close beside her and supported her on one arm she did not appear conscious of his presence. By-and-by her lips ceased to tremble, and she smiled. Then she coughed again, turned to one side, and clasped both hands to her breast. Stanislas quietly placed a handkerchief in her grasp.

"I have known her to have a dozen of these in a night, *mon ami*," he said, almost gaily. His face was still pale, but it was easy to see that the strain on his mind was not so great since Vera's illness had become manifest. "Sometimes she suffers terribly! But her patience is quite ——"

He ceased speaking, and slowly removed his arm from beneath Vera's shoulder. The girl had come back to earth at last, and had fixed upon the musician such a look that it almost froze his blood. Colonel Cliff, thinking of it years afterward, felt a singular chill. Stanislas cowered before the light of Vera's virginal eyes. There was something new in them, something which desperately alarmed him. With feminine delicacy and grace the girl arranged herself in a more careful reclining posture; then, leaning

her head on one hand, and plucking at the folds of a clean handkerchief with the other, she said to Stanislas —

"That is the last time that you must ever touch me. There is a gulf between us hereafter. Oh! go — go away to some place to hide before it is too late."

She loves him, thought the Colonel, looking down sadly at the strange pair, and feeling pity for both in his great and good heart. She loves him, but she will never forgive him for betraying their cause! And, as if she were echoing his very thought, Vera continued —

"I am punished as I deserve. I, too, am to blame, for I have wandered from my ideal. But I am afraid that this is too much for your nerves, Monsieur," she said, glancing up at the Colonel. "Will you allow me to say that it would be useless to wait — for your answer—now."

"Do I understand you to refuse me the information that I asked for concerning the present whereabouts of Pleasant Merrinott, Mademoiselle?"

"I must refuse it. If it was my duty before I had learned of this treachery, it is more than ever necessary that I should do so now."

"But of what avail can it be when your plans are all discovered, checked, prevented?"

"Prevented?" cried the girl, sitting up and gazing at the Colonel in genuine surprise. "You forget, Monsieur, that an organization strong enough and daring enough to attack what you call civilized society everywhere is not likely to have its plans *prevented* by accidental disclosures in one particular section." She spoke her English trippingly now, taking a certain pride in choosing her words and in avoiding any eccentricities of accent. Despite her illness she was cool, calm, clear-headed. "And can you not see that it would be rather inconsistent in me to betray one of our secrets just at the moment when I have rooted a betrayer out of my heart, and cast

him away from me for ever? Do you wish me to sell my life as cheaply as — as he has sold his?"

"No, Mademoiselle, I wish you to do nothing that you would consider dishonourable. I have done *my* duty, and I will now leave you. I am glad that you personally are shielded from the punishments and humiliations that your fellow-conspirators are to undergo, and if I might offer you some advice, it would be to renounce your allegiance to Bakounin, and to devote your attention to recovering your health. The world," added the Colonel, putting on his English air, "is altogether too green to burn. The all-consuming fires that you would like to scatter broadcast through the lands to-morrow are probably hidden away in the bosom of nature, but it will be centuries yet before they will break through the crust. You are five hundred years in advance of the times, Mademoiselle. Why, it is scarcely an hundred years since the Bastille surrendered! You must be more patient under this mystery of sin and sorrow, of oppression and inequality, which pervades society, just as you were patient in your physical suffering a few minutes ago. Believe me, your dream of a great revolution for the destruction of society is a mistake. Relinquish it; turn from it, before it is too late. It grieves me to see such a noble soul as yours wedded to an almost inexcusable folly."

Vera listened attentively, conghing now and then, but making efforts to control the aggressive hemorrhages. When he had finished and had turned away, a little stirred by the emotions which his pity for the unfortunate girl had aroused, she said —

"It is useless for us to enter upon a discussion. From your standpoint you are right; seen and judged from mine, my conduct is absolutely correct — or will, at least, henceforth be so. For I am as one moving in the world, yet not of it; no part of my kingdom is here; I am but

the instrument chosen to further the destruction. I am sealed with a vow. I am consecrated to a purpose, and for me its realization is as certain as it is that the sun will rise to-morrow. When I fall, another will take my place, as another has taken *his* place already."

She pointed to Stanislas, who had sat down on the carpet, with one elbow leaning on the broad cushioned seat of the arm-chair, and was listening with a look of growing fear in his eyes. She seemed to reflect a moment; then she looked up suddenly to the Colonel and made a pleading gesture. "Oh, Monsieur!" she said, "you can readily see that I am faint and ill, and I am certain that you will not refuse to do me a service."

"I will do anything that I can properly do for you, Mademoiselle."

"Then take *him* away with you; convince him that he is in danger; urge him to conceal himself."

"No more of this!" said the musician, flushing. "I will leave you, Vera, until you have become convinced that my course was correct; but I will not run before the fanatics of any secret society! I defy them! They are surrounded by a network through which they cannot creep. Listen to me, Vera, and let me convince you once for all. Six months after you had converted me to the doctrines of Bakounin, in Moscow, and after it had been agreed that, the better to shield you in your undertakings while you were in Switzerland and other countries, you should, if occasion required, claim to be my sister — six months after that time I was in Warsaw. One evening, just as I was leaving for the reception which had been organized in my honour at the house of a lady of high rank, a gentleman called upon me. I said that I could not be seen — was engaged, but he forced his way in, and told me who he was. He knew everything about my relations to the conspiracy, my romantic, intellectual

alliance with you — everything! The man was a demon. He gave me my choice — to be handed over to the tender mercies of the Third Section, of which he was one of the most cunning agents; to be packed into jail like a thief who had been pilfering black bread; or — or ——"

"Well," said Vera, coughing, and moving one hand impatiently, "or? ——"

"Or to become his ally; to follow the movements of the conspirators with whom I had allowed myself to be associated. Well, I had debts — enormous ones — about which no one knew, it is true, except the usurers to whom I was bound body and soul; I was in desperate straits, and now here came this thunderbolt from the hands of the Government. What could I do? I made a sudden resolve. I told the police agent that if he would agree to shield you from punishment, in any case, I would accept — accept the bargain which he offered me. The agreement was made, and since that time, Vera, I have been protecting you against yourself. What else could I do? Conspiracy in Russia is hopeless; and I had, in a moment of passionate excitement, been drawn into complications with conspiracy which would have proved fatal had I not taken the one road out of the difficulty."

"And so, since that time, you have kept the Russian Government informed of my movements?"

"But I have saved you! You are free as air, to go where you will. Oh! I was adroit; I convinced them that you had been drawn, like myself, in a momentary impulse, into the conspiracy. And I suppose ——"

"That they knew how much they had to gain by watching me at work," interrupted the girl. Her face grew dark. "Stanislas," she said, "there was a sacred bond between us. You have broken it. Hereafter you are as one dead to me. I loved you; I respected you; I gloried in your genius; I believed in your sincerity. My

love blinded me to your horrible duplicity. I am punished. I shall go away from this place to-night. I must never see your face again. Your death is at hand. Leave me!"

She sank back exhausted, with one palm pressed against her bosom, as if she had just received a fatal wound there.

Colonel Cliff felt like taking the musician by the collar and dragging him out of Vera's presence, but he restrained his inclination. Vera was soon in another convulsion; her eyes were closed; her teeth were set; her hands were tightly clenched; her breathing was heavy. Suddenly it seemed to stop altogether.

"She must be raised up — quickly," said the musician, in a hollow voice; but he did not rise and offer to aid her. He seemed half stunned by what she had said to him.

Colonel Cliff stooped and gently lifted the girl. "Is there no remedy which she is accustomed to use for these convulsions?" he said.

But Stanislas did not answer. He appeared to be dreaming.

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Caro stood in the ante-chamber, trembling in every limb. She had started to fly from the place where she had already heard too much when the Russian girl had first confessed her love for Stanislas. The fall of the screen had been caused by her nervous movements, and she had fled terrified to the outer door and opened it. But she did not go out; she instantly closed it again, and leaning against it, listened to the remainder of the strange conversation. It seemed to her now that she had a right to hear; that it was her duty to learn all. But when Vera had said the words, "There was a sacred bond between us," the blood rose to Caro's brow. She felt angry, humiliated, outraged. She turned away with

despairing gesture, softly reopened the door, and was soon downstairs and in the street.

For a minute or two she stood hesitating; she was almost inclined to go back and demand an explanation; but she recovered speedily, walked briskly to a carriage stand, secured a cab, and was half-way home before she realized the full measure of her grief. When she reached the house she was glad to find that her mother had not returned from the dressmaker's. She went up on to the roof balcony, and there, when she felt sure that she was quite alone, and that no one could hear her, she gave way to an agony of weeping.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

DÉBUT.

WHEN the blue mists return to Paris, late in October, and the days are damp and chilly, the Parisians are suddenly seized with an irresistible longing for the concerts and the theatre, from which they have absented themselves for months. This is the period which elderly ladies who have once been renowned in the world of song or of drama invariably choose for their own "reappearances" or for the *débuts* of their pupils. The great La Vange, whose statuesque beauty and superb contralto voice had once been the joy of Europe, had long been living in comparative seclusion at Asnières, where she was the lucky owner of two or three villas, each of which she inhabited in turn for a month or two at a time, when it occurred to her that she would like to own a house at Passy.

She consulted her banker, and found that the funds at her immediate disposition were not quite sufficient to allow of the purchase of the property which she had selected. "Better wait a year," suggested the banker. "No," said La Vange; "in a year I may be in Père La Chaise; I am tired of seclusion, and I wish to give some receptions in the Passy house this winter. Ah! I have it! I must make a reappearance — I must have a benefit concert; and we will put the prices so high that there

will be no doubt about making up the sum." "Oh, if Madame proposes to give a concert, I shall be only too happy to advance the extra money needed for the purchase," said the banker.

And so it happened that La Vange got the coveted house, and that her great name adorned the yellow posters on the bill-boards in front of the Theatre-Italien, and that Caro Merlin was thus afforded an opportunity to exhibit the qualities of her voice before a fashionable Parisian audience.

"Every one of the critics will be present," Mélari had said to the girl, "for the reappearance of La Vange is as interesting to them as a comet is to the astronomers. You could not get another such a hearing if you were to try for it for years. So courage! and we shall soon have you launched forth upon the sea of fortune! by which, if you please, *chère mademoiselle*, I mean that we shall see you engaged for a first appearance during the next spring season in London. Courage!"

If Mélari could have seen his favourite pupil on the morning of the day of her *début* in Paris, he would have thought that she was in bitter need of all the encouragement which he could offer. The girl arose at dawn, white-faced, with dark lines beneath her eyes, from the couch on which she had tossed sleeplessly all night, and a shiver of disgust passed over her pretty shoulders as she put on her garments and took up the burden of life again — burden which had become almost intolerably heavy. She had managed to escape from a meeting with her mother the previous night; she had felt that she could not endure it; that she must suffer alone; and so she had locked herself into her bedroom, protesting absolute necessity for seclusion, that she might be fresh for the important duties of the morrow.

Mrs. Merlin had come home toward midnight, worn out

with the fatigue of waiting, and with anger at the officiousness and insolence of French dressmakers.

"I come mighty nigh boxin' the ears of one o' them pert sauceboxes down there," she said to Caro through the keyhole, at the same time announcing that she had brought home the dress. "It's perfectly lovely," added the old lady; "we'll try it on first thing in the morning."

And while the good soul sank quickly away into well-earned repose, her daughter lay hating the world, mourning over her love, and wishing she were dead. Caro bestowed no thought upon the responsibilities of the approaching concert during the night; she was passing in review all that she had heard said by Stanislas and Vera, and every word that the Russian girl had uttered seemed to burn into her soul. Caro felt humiliated because she had not been able to form a more accurate judgment of the character of Stanislas; although she loved him as deeply as before, she seemed in some strange way contaminated and dishonoured by his professed affection for her. Her mind was filled with intense jealousy of Vera; she had understood the sombre and exalted words of the mystical enthusiast to mean much more than their real significance; and with the withdrawal of her respect from Stanislas, Caro had expected to see her love for him fade out. But no! it remained, and imperiously asserted its intention to remain in her heart. It had been a source of inspiration, but now it seemed to add to the heaviness of her burthen.

And what had the wretched musician done? He had betrayed his fellow conspirators, and thus jeopardized his life. Perhaps at that very moment, while she was rising and facing the day which was to decide the fate of her career, he was lying, white and still, at some street corner, struck down by the hand of the avenger. The thought filled the girl with horror; her unsteady nerves

thrilled with pain as her heated imagination pictured for her an hundred terrible dangers into which the musician's imprudent and, perhaps, dishonourable conduct had led him.

What if he should come to her for asylum; should ask her for protection against the Vera who had confessed that she loved him madly, devotedly, and whom he had called "his little love!" Could she spurn him from her — send him out to encounter certain death? No; she consulted her heart carefully, and she was sure that she could not do *that*. And she would see him that very day! He would not desert her on this all-important occasion, when he had solemnly promised to stand by her, and to do everything in his power to aid her success. She was confident that he would come, and she would shield him until the storm of resentment for his treachery to his comrades had passed by! She could never respect him more; that was unutterably sad, yet true as sad; but she could, she must love him!

She awoke from her reverie, and found herself standing before her dressing-table, clasping her hands together. She was a little astonished to find that there were tears in her eyes. She swept them away angrily, and the least bit of colour struggled into her pallid cheeks as she remembered that she had to sing before a refined and hypercritical audience in a few hours. Her ambition, which had been rudely jostled aside by the disclosures of the night just passed, came back to its old place. She marshalled her determination.

"I must not let this blow crush me!" she whispered. "I *will* succeed to-night! I *will!* Let death, let loss of love, let endless sorrow and bereavement come afterward — to-day, *to-night* I *will* concentrate my whole energy upon my art!" She lightly brushed her hair back from her heated forehead, softly opened her door, passed

through the room in which her mother was peacefully sleeping, and went down into the garden.

The sparrows were twittering their morning prayer for alms; those dun-coated friars of the bird world had hard picking now that fog and mist had come, but they recognized a friend in Caro, and one of them flew almost into her face to attract her attention, then retired to a chimney-pot to scold at her when he found that she did not listen to him. The sun came out gloriously after a little, and Caro accepted this as a good omen. A leaf came floating down and lodged upon her breast; she caught it up and kissed it passionately, for it reminded her of the day when she stood with Stanislas at the door and listened with delight to his tender words of love. Stanislas! Stanislas everywhere! His image was constantly in her vision, and she felt that if she were required to cast him out of her life, to forget him, to banish him, the effort might kill her.

"Mercy! daughter! how white your face is!" was Mrs. Merlin's cry when Caro went in, after wandering for an hour bareheaded under the melancholy boughs of the trees which were losing their last leaves. "You haven't slept a wink, I know! Now, Caro, *don't* break down to-day of all days in the world! Think how we have struggled, and — and — how it would tickle about twenty young women who have failed, if you should join their ranks! My senses! if Miss Scolley should see you make a blunder or a failure to-night, I believe she'd elevate that little stuck-up nose of hers until she'd break her neck short off, and that mebbe *would* be some consolation."

"I shall not fail, mother," said Caro, gently. The sight of the worn, prosaic, homely face, beaming with motherly love and solicitude, touched her heart. "Where is the wonderful new dress? May I look at it? We must get all these smaller preparations finished early. Mélari is coming at nine."

"And Stanislas with him, I suppose," said the mother, fixing her gaze sharply on Caro, for a moment or two.

"He promised to come," answered the girl, lowering her eyes.

After she had seen the dress, and tried it on, and praised its beauty, she climbed slowly to her study-room. Half-way up the circular stairway she reeled, and would have fallen, had she not convulsively clutched the railing. She sat down in her old leathern arm-chair near the piano when she reached the study; but she did not sing a note, nor even look at the music-books.

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The Theatre-Italien is gone now, and in its stead is a banking establishment of which fashionable Paris does not even know the name, for society has not visited the Place Ventadour since the Muses were expelled from it. The shabby building in which the Parisian *beau monde* and wealthy strangers from all corners of the world had been content to take their Italian Opera for two full generations was still considered sacred, however, at the time of Caro's *début;* and La Vange, whose most brilliant successes had been achieved there, would not have consented to reappear anywhere else.

Audiences at the *Italiens*, as the theatre was familiarly called, differed from those assembled elsewhere in the French capital: there was about them an indefinable air of distinction, of refinement; people came and went with dignity and a certain amount of solemnity, as they go and come in church. To be seen at the Italiens at least once a week in the season was indispensable; and the legions of pretty young girls whose mammas would have perished rather than have permitted their daughters to see the "Chandelier" at the Comédie Française, or, indeed, to visit a veritable theatre at all, were willing enough that they should bare their lean, yet snowy

shoulders now and then, and listen to the questionable, although enchanting philosophy filtered through the bewitching music of "La Traviata," or to the ineffable sadness of Donizetti's dreamy and romantic "Lucia."

The mammas, as they rustled in their *loges*, and heard the familiar airs for the hundredth time, now and then fancied that they saw a ghostly procession of vanished glories flitting across the stage, headed by Lablache and Rubini, and with those splendid singers, Mario, Tamburini, the divine Malibran, Persiani, Sontag, and Grisi, in their train. "*Hélas! mes enfants!*" the mammas would say to the daughters who were in ecstasies over some newly arisen Spanish or Italian star; "you can never see the great Mario as Almaviva in the 'Barber!' Life no longer seems worth living! And those delightful days when La Vange came to startle us into enthusiasm once more, after the demi-gods had long departed! What can compensate for them?"

They had all carefully cherished La Vange in their memories, and the result was that the renowned singer attracted a brilliant audience to the Italiens for her benefit concert. The house was filled punctually at eight, but the audience was so ecstatically engaged in self-admiration that the stage-manager did not venture to ring up the curtain until nine. La Vange's old admirers, the *beaux* of the last generation, came in scores, and paid fabulous prices for comfortless chairs placed in the central aisle, which the Italiens, unlike most Parisian theatres, happened to possess. There were diplomats and generals by dozens; celebrated authors with vast beards and bald heads; and English dowagers with indescribable toilettes. Beautiful ladies, a bit *passées*, from New Orleans, and Pernambuco, and Santiago, and Rio de Janeiro, and Barcelona, and Havana, came to salute the singer who had once charmed them in their far-off homes;

Russia had sent a delegation of its prettiest blondes, accompanied by their husbands and fathers, each of whom had probably offered his heart and hand, in his time, to La Vange; and there was a flaring German scion of royalty in the very centre of the first row of *loges*. Along the sides of the section devoted to the orchestra stalls were ranged the critics, young and old, a compact and formidable army of scribes, ready to waken Paris to laughter if La Vange should prove exhausted and should make a *couac* with her once peerless voice; ready to pillory the *amateurs* who dare, on such occasions as "benefit concerts," to thrust themselves into comparison with professionals; and ready, also, to transfix little Caro's dawning artistic reputation upon the points of their diamond-tipped gold pens, should she falter or show by any smallest sign that she had mistaken her vocation. They had all heard of Caro; some of them had seen her, and had been touched by her beauty; and Mélari had been among them since the doors of the theatre were opened, prophesying success for his favourite pupil.

But where was Stanislas — the great Stanislas — who had promised to be present? This question was asked by each of the critics, who, with the malevolent acuteness which distinguishes the members of their profession, had guessed that the musician was strongly interested in Caro; and Mélari was obliged to bite his lips with vexation, and to answer that he had no information as to the comings and goings of the pianist. For Stanislas had not been seen at Mrs. Merlin's all that day; Stanislas was not visible in any of his accustomed haunts; and at his lodgings the *concierge* had discouraged the inquiries of the messenger whom Mrs. Merlin, impelled by Caro's distress, had sent to find him, with the statement that he knew nothing whatever about the musician's movements. One or two of the critics were wagging their heads, and

looking wise, as they vaguely remembered some rumour that they had heard about the relation of Stanislas to a certain recent conspiracy, when Mélari and those near him were much surprised by the arrival of the man in question. He pushed his way past complaining and grumbling ladies and gouty old gentlemen, saluted right and left, as was his wont, and dropped into his reserved seat with the air of a man thoroughly at peace with himself and with the world, although he was very pale.

Caro was standing on the stage, beside La Vange, to whom she had just been presented, and the two were peeping through a round "eye-hole" in the curtain, contemplating the audience, when Stanislas came in. The young girl started so that La Vange looked at her with amazement, and Caro felt the need of stammering an excuse. There was the beloved face! There was Stanislas alive and well, and apparently in no dread whatever of avenging conspirators. She would sing for him. and she would succeed. She forgot his cruel neglect, and thought only of his presence. Just as she had spied Alice and Mrs. Harrelston in their box near the stage, there was a cry to "clear the boards," and she had but time to retreat into the wings before the curtain went up, and two sprightly actors were playing a one-act comedy. She stood in the shadow watching the scene so novel to her with interest; but the cold air, the smell of gas, the jostling to which she was subjected as the stage-manager and his aids rushed recklessly about, wearied her. She retired to a dressing-room, and sat down beside her anxious mother.

Half an hour passed slowly enough for Caro. At last thunders of applause announced that the idol of the evening, the great La Vange, had appeared. There was an encore, then there were six recalls, and then, as the audience had begun to buzz and chatter very audibly, every one wishing to exchange reminiscences of the re-

nowned woman with every one else, a grimy-faced boy appeared in front of Caro's retreat, and said, "Number four; Mademoiselle Merlin, if you please!"

"Now, Caro," said her mother; and Caro arose, threw aside her shawl, took her music, and stepped briskly forward.

There was a little flight of stairs to go up; a dark-haired gentleman gave her his hand, with an exceedingly deferential "Pardon!" and then bowed his way before her to the stage, where he sat down at the piano. Caro was to sing the "Jewel Song" from Faust. The first notes were heard; the talkers began to cease their conversation and to stare coldly and rather impertinently at the beautiful girl who stood, calm and dignified, before them, about to solicit their approval. The ladies consulted their programmes, and seeing the name *Miss Caro Merlin*—for Caro had decided to assume no false colours—they smiled at each other, and whispered, "*Une Anglaise*. Now we shall be amused!" The old men shifted their opera hats from hand to hand and showed their teeth; Mélari put on a sympathetic smile; the critics grinned derisively; and Caro felt that, with the exception of a few personal friends scattered hither and yon throughout the theatre, she had in front of her fifteen hundred people who would willingly applaud her if she succeeded, but who felt convinced that she would not achieve success.

Nevertheless, she began to sing, and as she sang she looked at Stanislas, in the vague hope that some inspiration born of his love would bear her through the trial which was every moment growing more formidable. But she was surprised to see a portly gentleman with yellow whiskers, who was seated directly behind Stanislas, lean over and touch the musician's shoulder, and to see Stanislas start violently, look around, and then, as by instinct, gaze up at a point in the gallery. The girl sang bravely on, but her

eyes followed those of Stanislas until they rested on a strange-looking old man, with scarred and wrinkled face, and with a long white beard. This man was leaning over the railing, and watching the musician as a cat watches the mouse upon which she is about to spring.

To the astonishment of his neighbours, who were beginning to give a little sympathetic attention to Caro, Stanislas arose hastily, and made his way out, brushing against the ladies, and elbowing men almost brutally. Murmurs and cries of "Sit down!" were heard, but he paid no attention to them. With a look of terror on his face, he scrambled on until he reached the end of the row of seats; then disappeared through a door, heedless of the remonstrances addressed to him.

Caro's voice failed, sank; a mist arose before her eyes; she saw anew the vision of Stanislas lying white and still; she clutched her music desperately — but the murmuring audience seemed to recede; despair choked her utterance; she staggered, and fell. The pianist hastened to her side; the curtain was rung down; and the critics shook their heads, and fanned themselves vigorously with their hats. Mélari glared at the pitiless society dames who giggled at the catastrophe, and bit his lips until the blood came.

A minute afterwards the door of the Harrelstons' box was opened, and a soft voice said in French, "Is Mademoiselle Harrelston there? Can I speak with her?"

"Perhaps Caro has sent for me, mother," said Alice, rising. "May I go to her?"

"Certainly, my dear — that is, if you think ——" And Alice stepped into the narrow passage.

The messenger was a small girl, dressed in black. She put a note into Alice's hand, and placed one finger on her own lips, to indicate silence. Evidently this summons was not from Caro. Alice broke the seal.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE TEMPTER.

Mrs. Merlin slowly drew off her gloves, and looked at her daughter as if she would read her thoughts. The old lady's face was stern. Caro felt that she could detect a certain anger mingled with the pity which she knew that the mother could not choose but bestow upon her unlucky daughter.

They were at home, in the great study-room, which was a weird and melancholy place when dimly lighted by Caro's little reading lamp. One might readily have imagined it filled with the shades of the dead and gone painters who, in successive generations, had inhabited it, and had there nourished their lofty ambitions or struggled with their despairs. Caro thought of them as she sat in the old arm-chair, while the pall of her own ill luck settled slowly down upon her. The gloom almost frightened her. She fancied that she could hear footsteps upon the circular stairway; and she wished, with all her heart, that she were comfortably at home in Illinois. It seemed very far away now — farther than ever, since she began to feel that she was on the border-land of failure in her cherished plans. The tears filled her eyes. She gave her small, cold right hand to her mother, who took it between her two warm palms, and held it gently while she waited for the girl to speak.

"I am sorry, mother, heartily sorry for your sake," at last Caro said; "but for my own sake I don't care the first grain. I only know — that — I wish — I were dead."

The old lady did not speak. She continued her searching gaze, and Caro began to grow a trifle rebellious under this mute interrogation, which had a decided savour of accusation in it.

"I thought you were sorry for me, mother," she added; "but I begin to believe ——"

"Wal," said the old lady, breaking her silence and speaking in her most matter-of-fact, her harshest tones, "I don't care nothin' about the accident to-night. I don't consider that it's a failure, and I don't think 't any of them girls that was grinnin' up in the fourth-story boxes think that 'twas either. Mélari come behind the curtain to see me before you was brought to, and he said that Miss Lottie Eldridge said that you fainted on purpose so's to get a lot of notices in the French papers. I declare I believe it would do me good to box that girl's ears. On the whole," continued Mrs. Merlin, with the air and tone of a general summing up the result of an unsuccessful action, which yet could not be called a defeat, "I don't know as any great harm's done to your career. It is jest as Mélari says; it can't be called a first appearance, because you hadn't had time to appear when you went down as if you'd ben shot. But that isn't what worries me. If that was all, and if there was no secret cause, no trouble," — here Mrs. Merlin's voice grew harder and somewhat lower, and her manner became condemnatory — "no secret cause, I say, of all this, I could go to bed and sleep as comfortable as usual. But there's somethin' wrong, and I want you to explain it to me before we move from where we are now."

She released her hold of Caro's hand, and stood eyeing her as if she were determined to exact an explanation, no

matter how much it might wound and weary the girl in her excited and fatigued condition.

Caro's look was proud, but her voice trembled as she answered, "We can have no confidences, no confessions to-night, mother. I asked you, when we were in the cathedral at Berne, never to distrust me again. And I made up my mind, then and there, that if you did me so little honour as to doubt me, the sooner I stopped telling you of my feelings and — and my impressions, the better. You never did understand me, and you never will. It's no time to-night, after all that has happened, to worry and scold me, and I wish you to comprehend that I don't propose to be lectured. I am ashamed that I was so weak, and that you have to suffer with me in my failure; but I tell you that when you begin to ascribe my weakness to some unworthy thing you go decidedly too far. And I wish you would go downstairs and leave me to my own thoughts. I think they will furnish me company enough." She sprang out of the chair, threw aside her bonnet, nervously replaced a loosened hair-pin in her chestnut braids, and went away into a dark corner.

Mrs. Merlin quailed. She adored Caro when the girl rebelled against her wavering and brief manifestations of maternal authority. But her heart was sore, and she felt it her duty to say something more.

"Yes, Caro," she murmured, plucking at her sleeves and beginning to cry, "oh yes, — I recollect how you scolded me in the church at Berne that night when Stanislas played all that raving mess of music on the organ, and when you —— I tell you it would have ben better for you if you had never seen that man, and if I had never let him put his moonstruck foreign face inside our doors! And I want you to remember that he mustn't come around here any more! If you haven't got common prudence, I *have*, and I propose to exercise it. I warned

you about foreigners, but you wouldn't listen! There! I won't say another single word to you to-night." Then, changing her tone to the gentle one habitual to her when addressing her daughter, she added, "You'd better let me take your dress off, dear, and bring you your wrapper, if you're goin' to sit around any longer. It'll be a pity to wrinkle it, it's so pretty."

"Please leave me alone, mother, to-night," pleaded Caro. "We shall both be in a better mood to-morrow. Do go to bed, and when daylight comes we will have a talk, and decide what must be done. See that the servant goes to her room. I don't want her to think that we have been defeated down there to-night. Come! forgive me!" and, returning out of the darkness, she kissed her mother's wrinkled cheek, and pushed her gently to the door.

Mrs. Merlin yielded, and went slowly downstairs, mourning over the untoward event of the evening, and muttering sombre prophecies for the future. Caro closed the small door at the head of the spiral staircase, and was alone.

It was almost midnight. The girl but dimly recollected how she had found herself lying on a dusty sofa in a dressing-room, with her hair drenched with cologne water; how she had hidden her pale face in her mother's friendly bosom when Mélari had come to console her and to counsel her not to do what she had not dreamed of doing — attempt to appear again the same evening; and how finally she had been brought home in an ill-smelling cab, and had climbed up to her refuge in the leathern arm-chair with a kind of vague belief that with the morrow all earthly things would end. She was calmer now; but tears filled her eyes, and a burning flush invaded her brow as she thought of the gossip which her swoon would excite among the rivals who envied and hated her, especially if they had observed the hasty exit of Stanislas from the theatre.

Stanislas! Her mother's mention of his beloved name had awakened her ardent love for him with tenfold passion, and it glowed in her veins. He had neglected her, deserted her at the very time when she had most needed his presence — had been the cause of her humiliation; but she would pardon him all if she could but see him — if she could but feel his hand upon her hands, if the magic of his presence were once more vouchsafed to her — if he would hasten to take the necessary precautions for his own safety! What could she do to save him? How could she shield him against the vindictive enemies whom he himself had placed upon his track, and of whose whereabouts she knew nothing? On whom could she call? In whose name could she invoke protection for this wonderful artist, this man of genius, this musical demi-god whose name was famous in two hemispheres, and who was supposed to be above the reach of worldly cares or anxieties?

Her helplessness enraged her. She went, without being entirely conscious what she was doing, to the piano, and lighted the candles in the brackets on each side of the music-holder, and others in the candelabras at the sides of the huge room. These, with the lamp, made the darkness more visible, but seemed to cheer her up a bit. She sat down at the instrument, allowing her fingers idly to wander over the keys, and began rehearsing, in a low voice, that "Jewel song" of which she had made such wreck scarcely two hours before. The music soothed her; her courage began to return; and with it came again the vision which she had so many times seen of herself as a great and successful artist, crowned with the popular favour, and worshipped as one of the favoured ones of the earth.

"I *will* have my dream!" she cried, passionately, starting up from the piano. "I *will* succeed. I know I can and I must! I must put away all these small human pas-

sions and sympathies, and consecrate myself to art! But how," and here she paused, dreamy-eyed and absorbed in her reverie, and lowered her voice as she added, "how can I give up Stanislas? He is the very breath of my life. Sometimes I think he is my inspiration! ——"

She stepped hastily backward, uttering a faint cry, for she fancied that she heard the door which opened on to the balcony-roof close gently, and then the sound of a light footstep. Her first impulse was to seize the lamp and go up to the door, but in an instant she heard a second footfall, then a figure came into view on the stairs, and moved composedly down into the room.

Caro staggered back to the piano and clutched at it. She appeared now to have lost her voice, her strength; her individuality seemed for the moment to be merged in the being of him she loved — of the living and breathing Stanislas, who stood before her as if he had dropped from the sky in obedience to the earnest prayer in her mind that she might see him once more.

He was very pale, but otherwise unchanged. His eyes gleamed with the old familiar light, and his attitude was as graceful and striking as usual. Caro began to fancy herself the victim of an optical illusion. Surely this was not the man whom she had seen hurriedly quitting his place at the theatre, with the marks of fear upon him! Yet he lived — he moved — he spoke!

"I know you are amazed, *ma chère* Caro, to see me here, and coming from your balcony, at such an hour," he said, "but I can explain all. After what has occurred at the theatre, I feel that I am at a disadvantage — that I am in a false position; but" — and he moved quickly toward the girl — "will you let me explain? One of the critics ran after me in the lobby to tell me that you had fainted, and then it was that I cursed my stupidity. Oh, tell me, *chérie*, my own, my saint, was it because you saw

my agitation that you, too, lost control of your nerves? Never mind; it shall do you no harm; it shall be made up to you an hundredfold — *mille fois!* * Let us forget it already. You must know that I have been in an adventure, and, *sapristi!* I have narrowly escaped a tragedy!" He drew a long breath, and, taking a delicately perfumed handkerchief from his pocket, wiped his brow.

Caro sat down, feeling inexpressibly relieved at his last declaration. After all, how could she blame him for this intrusion at such an hour? If he had come to her, and asked her to shield him, would she not instantly have done it, no matter at what time of night or day? Here he was — alive, and congratulating himself on his final escape from his enemies. Was not that joy enough for the moment! She felt like sounding a pæan of rejoicing on the white keys.

"I must tell you," he continued, "that I have been fortunate enough to give the Russian Government some interesting news about a band of conspirators — wicked people — who have been operating against the peace of the Empire from their haunts in half a dozen countries. And do you know that those impudent people were actually foolish enough to wish to kill me for betraying their small secrets! Bah! They even sent me word that they *would* kill me. Now I would not have cared much about that threat had the police been so lucky as to get all the conspirators; but one of them, the most dangerous and vindictive of all the delightful party, is still at large. You can fancy my amazement when, at the concert to-night, I felt my shoulder touched from behind, and looking around I saw a Polish gentleman who used to be in the diplomatic service, and whom I have known here in Paris for some time. He called my attention to a figure in the gallery, and who do you think it was? Why, my uncaught conspirator — a scurvy old rascal, well known in Poland and

* A thousand times.

Russia as guilty of provoking many conspiracies during his long life. I made up my mind that that was the man who had been delegated to kill me, and so I made all possible haste to get out and communicate with the police, and have him taken before he could leave the theatre."

"I saw him, leaning on the gallery rail and looking at you," cried Caro. "But go on — go on! Was he caught?"

"Hum! not for the moment!" answered the musician. "He seemed to have got out of the theatre by magic. But the police agents of Paris will have him in their net to-night. I came up here at once, after I heard that you had — given up singing at the concert, and I — well — do you know when I found that I had arrived first, and that your garden door was open — and there was no light — I walked in, and climbed to the balcony, and shut the door and locked it! I said, 'No conspirator can get me here until I choose to open to him, at least;' and the sense of relief from feeling that I was followed was tremendous. Then I heard you come in, and — and now here I am! Does it not all sound like a story of the middle ages? And yet it is real nineteenth century — real and true! Oh, Caro! do not look at me with such great round eyes — so full of wonder. I know you have much to forgive — but I will explain all."

With a quick movement he was beside her. He placed one hand tenderly upon her pale forehead, and bent her beautiful head a little backward. In another moment his lips would have touched hers. But Caro arose, and Stanislas withdrew his hand, looking a trifle alarmed.

"Then explain to me," she said, feeling a wondrous longing that he might be able to do so, "how it is that you are not in danger when the conspirator most to be dreaded is at large — when Vera, who, by her own confession, is pledged to take your life because you have betrayed her and her accomplices, has not been arrested?

Answer me that—if you can,—to my satisfaction? Will she forbear to carry out her *mission* to you because—because there has been love between you?"

"*Bon Dieu!* how did you hear all this?" cried the musician, falling on his knees at her feet and grasping both her hands. "Sit down, Caro," he whispered; "be calm, and you shall have the explanation. Who has told you of Vera's ravings?"

The girl sank down once more on the seat, and told him how it was that she happened to overhear Vera's mystical prophecies of his doom. And while the musician covered her hands with kisses, and swore that he had never loved Vera, and that she had been the curse of his life, and that he did not fear her—Caro felt a new and invincible repugnance to the young artist's caresses arising in her heart. It seemed now to her as if in them there might be some hint of dishonour. The agony of renunciation was perhaps to come; she had tasted of the bitter cup of sorrow often of late; the draught might once more be presented at her lips. And now her senses were returning; she began to see the man in a new light—as one who had remorselessly sacrificed a woman who loved him, and for whom he disclaimed all affection. Or did he love Vera, and was she, the inexperienced, unworldly American girl who had yielded her heart into his keeping, was *she* deceived? This doubt was maddening, and the thought that Stanislas was untrue to any one—even to Vera—degraded him. She struggled to free her hands, and to end this visit, which she felt was dangerous and profitless.

"This is no time and no place to talk so wildly, Stanislas," she said. "You must retire, and to-morrow you can give me an explanation of your conduct. If you knew how it cuts me to the heart to doubt you! And how I suffer at the thought that some of those vindictive people may——"

He would not release her hands. There was a strange look in his eyes which she had never observed before. She shrank away from it, as if it might sear her brow.

"Oh, my little love," he said, "I love you and you only! With you I could brave the world; and with you I could hide from it, too, until the storm is over and there is no farther danger from these people. I don't know what Vera will do, but sometimes I am afraid of her. Why can we not go away — far away, where she could not track or follow us — you and I — together — always — in dreaming and in waking — in morning and at nightfall — together — in some southern — some remote land — where we could live — and love — and study — and be free! Listen! I would atone for all my neglect — I would make you a great artist, and you would fulfil your ambition, and make the nations sit at your feet. Oh! why could we not fly away from this mean place of care and trouble, and live in *a new world* of our own — careless of all the dull conventionalities — for each other — all in all. Would you go with me — if to-morrow I showed you the way ——"

"I do not understand you, Stanislas," said the girl, wrenching her hands free with such a violent effort as to astonish the musician. "And I am sure that you do not understand *me!* Are you mad, to talk to me of a runaway marriage, when I doubt you as I have never doubted you before? And why hide from the world? Oh, Stanislas, there was a moment when I thought that I should be proud to love you in the whole world's sight — but now ——"

"Marriage! who talks of marriage — who cares for it — in our artist world?" cried Stanislas, who seemed intoxicated with his new idea of flight with Caro, and who hoped to impel her to follow him wherever he commanded. "Who talks of laws and legal forms? Will social law help you in your career as a singer — oh, my love?"

The girl drew back, shudderingly, as from the brink of a great gulf. The enchantment was over; the moment of renunciation had indeed arrived. The mask had fallen; the angel was a demon; the demi-god was a foolish idol with feet of clay; the dream was done. Into the new world to which he invited her she realized that it would be death to enter.

"Now," she said, "I *do* understand you. There is but one thing left for you to do — *you*, the man whom I loved, and raised to the stars, and thought as good as you are talented — and that is, to go away at once, and never let me see your face again. *Don't* stand there! you make me wish that I were a man, that I might *kill* you!"

She heard him speak, protest, and plead, but she did not know what he said; and she felt as if a great load were taken from her heart when he had gone, feeling his way timorously down the darkened stairs. She was so dazed and abstracted that she did not fully realize where she was, or what she was doing, until she felt her mother's arms about her neck, and heard the querulous voice say —

"My darling daughter! Now I do know that it was wrong to doubt you, even for a single minnit! Thank God that you are a *reel* American girl, and that you can find your way straight through Europe without being watched over and spied on like these foolish young women here."

Then she understood that her mother had been aroused by the sudden appearance on the scene of Stanislas, and that the good woman had heard all.

"Europe is no place for us, mother," said Caro, suddenly, drying the tears which still would persist in coming unbidden.

CHAPTER XXXV.

VERA FINDS THE NEW WORLD.

When Alice had finished reading the note which the small girl in black had brought her, she hesitated for a minute, as if in doubt whether it were not her duty to return and inform her parents of the strange message which it contained. But presently her resolve was taken, and she turned to the diminutive messenger, saying —

"Show me the way. Is it far from here?"

"Not very far, Mademoiselle," answered the girl; "with a carriage we can be there in a few minutes. And none too soon, for the poor creature is alone, and when I left she seemed likely soon to be unconscious again."

Alice felt her heart thrill with pity, despite the hot resentment which now and then fought its way past all her best impulses, and insisted upon asserting its presence and importance. Proud, imperious Vera, the mysterious revolutionist, the priestess of destruction, the woman who had stolen away her love, who had enlisted the young Indian in a perilous and foolhardy enterprise, was ill, deserted and forlorn, in hired lodgings in the great capital, and had sent a piteous appeal to Alice to come to her at once. It was clearly her duty to go, she thought; there was a passionate appeal in the nervously written words of the note which she could not turn away from. There

would be time enough for explanation to her parents later; so she hurried with the girl to the vestibule of the theatre, and was about to step out into the damp night air with her, when she discovered that she had forgotten her cloak.

"You must return to the box and ask for my wraps," she said to the girl. "Say that I will be back soon, and take care not to explain where I am going. Hasten!"

And while the child flew to obey her orders, she stood looking out on the dreary waste of the Place Méhul, wondering if she were to hear news of Pleasant Merrinott. It seemed to her that the crucial moment had arrived; that now she was to know whether she were to be condemned to despair, or to find new hope before her. The vision of the Cherokee's dark, handsome face arose; she closed her eyes to force back the tears which came as she thought of the cruel separation on which he had insisted. But suddenly she felt vaguely conscious of a presence which seemed to menace her, and, opening her eyes and looking out again, she saw, to her astonishment and horror, the patriarchal conspirator, Ignatius, standing on the outer steps, and gazing attentively at her. The scarred and wrinkled face, the gray beard, the sparkling eyes, the expression of mingled malice and mournful disappointment were all burned into her memory, and she recognized them instantly.

At first she was frightened, and felt like calling for protection from this veteran destructionist, who might possibly have some vengeance to execute upon her. She looked around; there was no one save a lame programme peddler near her; and when she glanced out again, Ignatius was gone. Alice shuddered as she endeavoured vainly to think of a reason for this apparition; but when the small girl came back she put on her cloak and went away boldly with her.

Alice was surprised when the slowly moving cab which they had taken stopped before the door of a handsome house on the Boulevard Malesherbes, near the Madeleine. Vera had left no address on the cards which she had sent to the Harrelstons, and Alice had expected to be conducted into some back street in an obscure quarter, like that into which she had penetrated in pursuit of old Ignatius. She ordered the coachman to wait for her, and was soon in the long drawing-room at the top of the house, where Colonel Cliff, Vera, and Stanislas had so lately had their explanation. A single candle was burning feebly in a bronze candelabra attached to the wall. There was a faint odour of perfumes and medicines in the room, and as Alice entered she heard a stertorous breathing which alarmed her.

"She is off again!" said the small girl, darting forward to the sofa, on which Vera was lying. "*La pauvre femme!* And who knows how long she has been so! See, she has been biting her hands!"

"What is the cause of her unconsciousness, of her illness?" asked Alice, throwing aside her wraps, and laying her bonnet on the mantle. She did not approach Vera at first; she was questioning herself. But soon the unerring feminine instinct told her that there was no contamination to be feared from the helpless, forlorn young creature, prostrate on the couch, with hands clenched convulsively, and with her teeth set over one delicate finger; with limbs rigid, and with features slightly distorted by the violence of the spasm into which she had fallen. She believed that Vera was pure, however misguided she might be, and she went forward impulsively, knelt down beside the suffering girl, and began to care for her.

"It's hemorrhages, Mademoiselle," replied the small attendant. "She has them for hours together, and they bring on these convulsions, which seem to rack her all to

pieces. See the handkerchief!" And she held up one saturated with blood.

Alice shrank back in genuine alarm. But pity took the place of fear. "We must bring her out of this at once," she said. "Has she no physician — no friends — no remedies?"

"The doctor has been here once," answered the girl, "and he said he would come again at midnight. He said, too, Mademoiselle," and the girl's voice sank to a whisper, "that she may in her weak and excited condition, be suffocated in one of these hemorrhages. She had no one here with her but — but Monsieur Stanislas, and — and I think they had some kind of quarrel. He went away and has not come back. So I begged of her to send for some one — and — finally — she wrote the note to you, and sent me to the theatre with it. She said she knew you would be there to-night. She must be raised up — see — there — she is purple again. With a bit of ice on her forehead perhaps she will come to her senses!"

Alice raised the slender form, and supported it, while the girl applied the simple remedies as the physician and Vera had taught her to do. By-and-by — it seemed to Alice as if it were an age — Vera's eyes opened, and she released her poor wounded finger from her teeth, and at last let both hands fall in her lap. An expression of intense weariness came over her face; intelligence seemed returning to her gaze; and Alice was about to speak to her, when she arose, with a convulsive spring and a loud cry, and clasped the sofa to support herself. Then, shuddering and moaning, she settled slowly down again, and coughed until the blood came oozing to her lips. She groped for a handkerchief, held it to her mouth, looked at it as she withdrew it saturated with the life current, shook her head mournfully, and then turned to Alice.

"Ah!" she murmured, faintly, "you have come! I am

so glad that you did not refuse to see me! Can you tell me if it is very—very late? Are the lights out here? I can hardly see you. Oh! find me some way to stop this! It—is—like hot steam! It takes—my life!"

"Let me help you," said Alice, tremulously. "Shall we not send for a physician again? Will you tell me, now that you are conscious, how to apply the remedies? I will watch with you until you are better."

"No—no—no!" said the Russian girl, earnestly. "No physicians. They can do me no good. They cannot even prevent me from biting my hands." Her lips trembled and laboured, and she seemed about to enter into another convulsion. But she caught Alice by one shoulder with a desperate, yet not painfully emphatic movement, as though she were anxious to cling to sanity and a normal condition as long as possible. "Do not be alarmed," she said, very sweetly; "I shall find strength and calmness yet to say much to you—for it is to you that I—would confess."

Then she began to babble in her native language, and to cough again, and Alice held her until her own strength gave way, and she was compelled to lay Vera's head back on the sofa pillow. The small attendant administered a powerful restorative which the physician had left, pouring it between the Russian girl's teeth as best she could; and, after a convulsion in which Alice thought it certain that the frail life would pass out into the unknown, Vera drifted once more back to a conscious condition. She put out one cramped hand gently to Alice, who took it, and held it tenderly, wondering why it was that she no longer felt any feeling of anger or enmity against this woman.

"It is very pleasant to be cared for," sighed Vera. "I have had but little care in my life—not enough, I think. Do you know that sometimes—even when I have been most eager in my work—my mission,"—she uttered these

last words reverently — "I have been *so* hungry for love — that I could have died for lack of it! — yes, I could have died because — but now I see that I was mistaken — that I am punished because I allowed my weak, human feelings to turn me aside. Ah! do you remember our little wager of the bouquet of violets about the Indian's enthusiasm?"

Alice unconsciously withdrew her hand from Vera's, and wild, unreasoning resentment sprang into her heart, and was manifest in her eyes. But the Russian girl seemed unabashed before it. There was in Vera's manner an unearthly and spiritual calm which grew momentarily more and more perceptible. The sinister and harsh expression which at times had been so noticeable in her eyes was gone, and in the blue orbs there shone only compassion, regret, and resignation. The restorative had given her temporary relief from the convulsions, and she seemed thoroughly composed as she took Alice's hand again, and held it as gently as before.

"The poor violets!" she said. "I had almost forgotten them in the rush and haste of important events. But I think that I should have won them, if Mr. Merrinott had remained in Europe. For now I do not think that he would have lost his enthusiasm or abated his interest in his work. I think he was true — true as steel."

The blood mounted to Alice's cheeks, and she started to arise, but Vera's slight grasp seemed to hold her down. How could she submit to hear praise of Pleasant's enthusiasm from this mystical creature who had misled him into the maddest of ventures!

"What have you done with him?" she asked hotly, yet scarcely knowing what she asked; "where is he? I *will* know where you have sent him!"

"I cannot tell you that without violating an oath," answered Vera, turning on her side and fixing her blue eyes firmly upon Alice. "But I will tell you this — that

the mission upon which he was sent is at an end, and the obligation which was placed on him is removed. In a very few days he will know all about this. I am sorry that I cannot tell you more — for I, too, know what it is to love —— "

"You love him! You love Pleasant Merrinott!" cried Alice, paling and recoiling from Vera.

"I, too, know what it is to love," repeated the Russian girl, calmly. "To love hopelessly, despairingly: and I would not have you suffer as I have suffered. No, it is not the Indian — good, brave, earnest man that he is, a pearl among men — it is not Mr. Merrinott that I love. But let us not talk of that. I wished you to know that the man you love is no longer bound to us, unless he chooses to be so. The plan which we were to work out together has been discovered; his usefulness and mine are at an end. He was but a simple disciple, not yet bound to us for ever, but only for the special work in America. I hope that now he will come back to you."

She pressed one hand to her breast and began coughing again, timidly, as if she suffered racking pain. Then, briefly and in impassioned and often eloquent language, she told Alice of the failure of the conspiracy, taking care to give her no details as to the actual aims of the conspirators either in Europe or America. She recited the treachery of Stanislas, and became so strongly excited that Alice, whose brain was giddy with newly-awakened hopes and fears, vainly besought her to cease talking.

"It was my punishment," said Vera, "my punishment that I should have been deceived in Stanislas; punishment for allowing love to creep into my heart after I had vowed myself, my whole existence, my talents, my energies, to the work of destruction. I fought against the passion with all my might; I tried to root it out of my heart; but it was useless. I could not do it. I made him my con-

vert, gave him my confidence, took him into my plans, because I loved him. If I had not yielded to the voice of love I should have been successful, and I would have made society tremble to its foundations!"

There was a strange fire in her eyes as she spoke thus. For a minute she was the old Vera, the determined and powerful agent of Bakounin; but the gleam faded away, and again she was only the suffering woman.

"If I have caused you any unhappiness, forgive me," whispered Vera, after she had spoken anew of Stanislas's betrayal of her plans, and the deadly danger in which he had thus placed himself. "Now that I know life is over for me I feel a strange longing to leave as few unhappy ones among the innocent as possible."

Alice knelt down by the Russian girl's side again. "Do not be downcast," she said. "You will recover from your illness and from your dream of destruction, and the world will be full of hope for you."

Vera's lips began to tremble and twitch once more. But she kept her eyes fixed on Alice's face.

"You are a good, sweet girl," she said, softly. "I should be — very happy — if you would kiss me on my forehead."

It was only for an instant that Alice wavered in presence of this request, but Vera's fine perceptions were not to be deceived.

"You need not fear, my dear," she added, proudly, but speaking even more softly than before. "I am as pure and as true as you are. There is no stain of the world upon me. My errors have been errors of the spirit alone. I have lived as a priestess of the Absolute Idea should live." And the proud yet broken-hearted virgin revolutionist feebly raised her head, as if inviting the caress which she had solicited.

Alice stooped and kissed her pale brow. "We must

save you," she said. "Let me send word to my family; we will have the best physicians. You must not sink down into discouragement and death."

The little maid brought the medicine, and Vera was about to take a strong dose, when her hands clenched again, her eyes closed, and she babbled incoherently, now in French, now in Russian, now in English. Alice was thoroughly alarmed, and despatched the girl for the doctor, not daring to wait until midnight. Vera beat her breast, and murmured at the pain which she felt. Her limbs were rigid, and poor Alice passed terrible minutes while the attendant was absent. Just as she returned, with the fat physician panting behind her, Vera sprang up once more with a loud cry, and fell back immediately, holding both hands over her right breast. Then she muttered —

"Save him, warn him, warn Stanislas — the vengeance! And remember the — Absolute Idea — man's will must be done! The world — must crumble into ruins; a new world must arise — and a new society reign triumphant on the ruins of the old. You will see it, you who remain behind! They who are left will finish the work ——"

She seemed to be searching for Alice, but her eyes were only half open, and she did not look toward the girl. She continued to talk in English — interspersing her monologue with scraps of other languages — and to tell of the charms which the new world would possess. Then came a violent convulsion, so prolonged that the doctor shook his head, and talked of sending for a priest.

"What are her wishes? Does any one know? If I could but bring her back to consciousness once more! Give me the brandy! and a fan! and you, little one, rub her feet! We must not let her remain in this condition."

But, even while he spoke, Vera had passed beyond the reach of his skill. The apostle of destruction, the priestess

of the Absolute Idea, had departed for a new world, grander than any which Bakounin had ever evolved from the recesses of his fiery imagination. Death had so subtly severed the chords of the slender life that the great change had been almost imperceptible, and Alice could not believe the doctor's sorrowful announcement until she had looked for some minutes upon the still face.

* * * * * *

It was nearly one o'clock in the morning when Alice, accompanied by the physician, reached her home, and told her half-distracted parents, who had just sent two servants to Miss Merlin's house in quest of her, supposing her to have accompanied the unlucky Caro home, of the scene which she had witnessed. Her mother was strangely frugal of reproof for her absence; and her father, who seemed in a curiously tender mood, led her into the library, and showed her a blue telegram lying on his desk.

"Read it," he said, "and then go to bed, little Alice."

The girl obeyed. It was from Mr. Harrelston's agent in St. Louis, and announced that Pleasant Merrinott had returned quietly to his home in the Cherokee Nation, and had thus far done nothing more mysterious than to settle peacefully down on his farm. Alice let the despatch fall from her trembling hands. Her father picked it up and folded it.

"I shall sail for America in the *Pereire* next Saturday," he said. "Would you like to accompany me?"

"If you think it best, papa."

"Very well. To bed; and to-morrow we will see that the unfortunate Russian girl has decent burial — a proper funeral ——"

"That's kind, Eric," said his wife, who was looking in at the library door; "but I don't think that the poor creature was a Christian."

"Perhaps not, my love; but I am one."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

BLUELOTS AND MERRINOTTS.

If any one who had never before seen him had looked upon Pleasant Merrinott, as he stood at the entrance of a great thicket in his beloved Indian Territory on a sunshiny morning, twenty days after the unfortunate Vera was dead and buried, and after Alice and her father had sailed from Havre for America, he might readily have fancied the young Indian a prophet of his tribe. Pleasant's devotion to the mystical doctrines of Bakounin had done him serious harm, and had it not been for the sturdy resistance offered by his magnificent physical organization, he might already have been registered among the many made insane by the great "apostle of man's will."

Had he remained in Paris, he would have been lost. The vastness of the vengeance upon society which he had been led to plan, his doubts and perplexities as to his duty to Alice, the hunger of his love, the torturing anxieties as to the fate of his sister conspirator, who, in his misguided enthusiasm, he had learned to revere as a saint who awaited, with tender and sweet resignation, the martyr's crown — all these, any one of which was enough to break down a man of less elastic temperament, had so preyed upon him that he was nervous, choleric, capricious in his moods.

When he had suddenly reappeared among his people in the vicinity of Tahlequah, the chief town in the Cherokee

Nation, and had shown little or no disposition to acquaint the simple folk, whose interests he had once seemed to have so much at heart, with the result of his self-imposed mission, they had whispered together that he had been unsuccessful. Much to his surprise and indignation, they soon began to look askance at him, and he found out the truth of the melancholy proverb that a prophet is not without honour save in his own country. His enemies were not slow to perceive that something extraordinary had happened to destroy Pleasant's prestige; and some of them circulated rumours that he had been converted to their views, that he now admitted the necessity of opening the territory to the white man, of giving up the ancient habit of holding the lands in common, and of merging race and uniting possessions with those of the stronger and richer neighbours.

When Pleasant heard that he was thus misrepresented, he at first flew into such a terrible passion that he was almost uncontrollable. He attributed the lies to the Bluelots, his hereditary adversaries, the cruel half-breeds who had killed his brother Elias, and he was not wrong. They sneered openly at his "mission," went about sowing discord even in the camps of his friends, and announced their purpose of "shooting him at sight." They pretended that he had espoused the views of their faction with some sinister and concealed motive. This was grave. Pleasant fully appreciated its gravity, armed himself, and slept with barricaded doors. When he went abroad he moved as if he were in a hostile country. Once he had been so popular that a dozen humbler Indians were glad to follow in his train when he went forth to hunt or to visit a neighbour's farm, and any one of these dusky rustic retainers would willingly have lain down his life for the man who wished to revive the independence and the purity of race of the ancient Cherokees. But now he went un-

attended save by one or two of his own relatives, who were themselves half angry with him for not explaining his position, and who regretted his return because they felt that it would inevitably precipitate a struggle which they had hoped to avoid.

At this juncture of affairs Pleasant was surprised, one morning, in his own house, by the entrance of a delegation of dark-skinned, stern-faced farmers, accompanied by a few Indians of the less civilized sort. He sat before a smouldering fire on the hearthstone, and his mother, crouching beside him, held his right hand in hers, while she kept her great jet-black eyes fastened on his weary and perplexed face. Pleasant's heart was deeply wounded by the mute reproach which he saw in his mother's eyes. Every one distrusted him; and when he saw the delegates mustering on the broad doorsteps he knew that the critical moment was at hand. A great desire came upon him to arise and go among this waiting throng, and tell them to follow him; that he would raise the standard of resistance; that it was their sacred duty to rebel, with arms in their hands, against every attempt to force the company of the whites upon them. A body of restless and ambitious men from Iowa and other North-western States was still encamped on the border line — some said actually within it — awaiting a favourable occasion for making their onslaught undisturbed, and taking possession of some fat lands which they coveted. Why could he not rouse these half-civilized farmers, these children of the forest, who would enjoy nothing more than a relapse into the habits of their ancestors, and who, once on the war-path, would fight desperately to preserve their rights? He had but to say the word — and all his lost influence would come back! He started from his seat to go to them, and to electrify them with passionate words; but in a moment he sank back again. The images of Ignatius and Vera came before him.

No! he must be silent! How could he explain to these men of the woods and plains that since he had gone forth into the world as their champion he had been converted to a doctrine which was beyond their comprehension; that, in despair because he could not secure their rights and his own rights, he had become an apostle of destruction; had taken a solemn vow to aid in pulling down the edifice which could not be improved; and had determined to whelm himself with them in general ruin, rather than to struggle for a partial rebuilding and remodeling, for which it was useless to hope? How could he tell them of Bakounin, and that he, Pleasant Merrinott, had returned to America as the agent of a secret organization, delegated to attempt an act which would bring upon him ignominy and execration? No, no; silence was his only refuge; he must be content to be misunderstood. He could not tell his own mother of the fearful responsibilities which he had accepted, and it was absurd to think of unfolding its nature to men who had not yet wholly laid aside the habits of savagery.

The delegation prepared to come into the house, finding that Pleasant was not disposed to come out. His mother whispered to him in Cherokee, "Your Winchester is leaning against the right side of the chimney. Don't let them surprise you."

"There will be no shooting, mother," said Pleasant, sadly. "At least, none on my part."

The men filed in slowly through the door, which was opened by Arch Sixkiller, himself one of the delegates, and yet a dependent of the Merrinotts. Pleasant did not rise, but looked up proudly. The delegation got into order, and the young Indian noted, with a bit of surprise, that it was composed of most of the important persons who had signed the original protest which he had volunteered to carry to Europe and present to Mr. Harrelston. There they were — Cornelius Blackfox, Felix Redbird,

Arch Sixkiller, Hurry Walkinstick—Hurry had a feather in his long black hair—Scale Ragsdale, Sultuckee Charlie, Synequvar, Stoning Deer, Garwarlarkee, Fishinghawk, Killerbill, Watts Johnson, Mix Water Mink, Ridder Sleepingman, Tee-cah-see-mu-kee, Ezekiel Hair, John Bross, Stand-in-the-Water, Blue Trap, John Proctor, and their untamed brethren from the great plains in blankets and war-paint. All of the men were armed, but none of them manifested any immediate hostile intentions. There was, however, no friendliness in any face. Every one seemed anxious to convey, by his expression, the strongest sense of disapproval and reproach.

Pleasant folded his hands across his knees, and awaited the address of the spokesman. His mother arose, and standing behind him, rested her hands upon his shoulders, but kept a watchful eye on the Winchester rifle leaning against the chimney-piece.

Cornelius Blackfox did the talking, and it was very short. He spoke in Cherokee, which is quite as energetic as English, and the substance of his remarks was as follows. Pleasant had volunteered to defend the menaced interests of the Cherokees. He had received their confidence, and had gone away to Europe, to foreign places which they had never even heard of, but where there were plots on foot against their homes and lands. He had at first worked well for them, and had been requested to remain abroad for a year or more. But now he reappeared among them, having relinquished his task at a moment when his presence in Europe was most necessary; —and in addition to this singular conduct he refused even to explain it, or to give them any account of what he had done. They had waited about long enough; they had slowly come to a conclusion which would have been reached more speedily had they not remembered that Pleasant was a Merrinott, and the son of a Merrinott

who had been high in honour among them. That conclusion was that Pleasant had been "bought up;" in short, that he was a traitor, and that he had thought, by coolly returning among them and maintaining an obstinate silence, to prevent any unpleasant questions. They considered his manner of proceeding entirely unjustifiable, and they therefore now gave Pleasant Merrinott notice that he must furnish them a definite explanation of his actions on the fifth day after the visit of this delegation at this, his own house, or must be prepared—and here Cornelius Blackfox paused a moment as if to give effect to his words, —"to be run out of the country." Then Cornelius, who was a full-blood, and solemn and undemonstrative in demeanour, fell back into the line out of which he had stepped to deliver his remarks, and awaited Pleasant's answer.

There was a look of sullen disappointment on all the faces when Pleasant, without rising, and with a sombre and mysterious expression, said that many things might happen in five days; that he was sorry the delegation came in a suspicious frame of mind; that some time every member of it would regret his suspicions; and that he would receive them five days from that time, and would then answer them more fully or not, as he saw fit.

One or two of the wilder members of the company seemed inclined to disturbance, but Cornelius Blackfox quieted them, and, after announcing that all would come again on the fifth day at the exact hour appointed, he marshalled his men into single file, and they went out through the low doorway without casting a look behind them. They mounted their horses, which had been tethered at a short distance from the dwelling, and rode away, —all but Arch Sixkiller, who lived on Pleasant's farm, and who came in again as soon as the horsemen had vanished.

"Pleasant," he said, in Cherokee, "I want to warn you. Don't take it any other way than it's meant. The Bluelots have been seen about here, and perhaps they're waiting for a chance to meet you. They were inquiring down the road what our party was to do up here to-day, and — and one of 'em said he'd take charge of the job of ridding the country of you. I don't mean any harm; I tell you just as the folks say 'twas said."

The brows of the Merrinotts — mother and son — grew dark. The mother was thinking of her boy Elias, who was brought home to her dead, killed by the ever inimical Bluelots. Pleasant was thinking of the Bluelot who had thrown him into the Grand River. For a few minutes the thought of his mission — his vengeance on society — vanished, and his heart was filled with a savage thirst for an encounter with the Bluelots. Let them come, one and all; he felt equal to meeting them.

"Go away, Arch," he said, softly. "You mean well, I reckon. Never mind the Bluelots. We shall have to have it out, some day." He turned toward his mother as if to reassure her, and was surprised to find a barbaric glow of satisfaction in her eyes. Evidently she hoped that he would avenge his brother's death.

Men like to fancy that they control and make events, but they are the veriest creatures of circumstance. Had Pleasant known, as he would certainly have known had he not so utterly secluded himself from the outer world since his return from Europe, that his fellow-conspirator Vera had gone the way of all the earth, he would have spoken to the Indian delegation; he might have placed himself at their head, and gone forth on some unwise and useless expedition. A certain epistle mailed to him from Europe had gone astray because of its defective superscription. The letter was sent by old Ignatius from a Swiss town (Ignatius dared not send a telegram) — and announced

in covert language the death of Vera, and the consequent "necessity of postponing all action beyond the Atlantic" until a substitute for Vera could be found, and simultaneous action in Russia and America could once more be arranged. What new resolves might not Pleasant, — capricious creature that he was — have formed, had he received this missive? While he thought he was fulfilling his mission of destruction, half a dozen unforeseen contingencies had shaped for him an entirely new course, and had pushed him into it.

* * * * * *

It was on the morning after the visit of the angry delegation that Pleasant was standing at the border of the great thicket, with the mystical and prophetic look upon his face. He was in daily expectation of being called — through the medium of a cipher-word sent by telegram from Russia — to proceed upon his dread mission.

His soul recoiled with horror from the task set for him; it seemed to him revolting to strike down an exalted and unsuspecting functionary, who was peacefully discharging his duties; but the specious doctrine that "the end justifies the means" had made sad inroads upon his conscience. He expected that death would be his certain lot after he had done his part in the conspiracy. He fancied that Vera would also find death close beside her duty, and he wondered if they would meet in any future life, any spiritual new world, from which they could look out over this planet, and learn whether their desperate efforts to establish a new society on the ruins of the old one had been crowned with success. And then, the horrible possibility that both Vera and himself might be dupes — that perhaps they were risking their young lives, sacrificing their loves, their honours, everything, for a vain chimera, flashed through his mind; and he reeled beneath it as if it had been a stroke, while he stood silently watching the

waving grasses and the dewdrops still glistening upon them.

Far off, in a patch of woods, the wild turkeys were calling; the musical bay of a hound was now and then borne on the breeze to Pleasant's ears; from time to time his quick hearing noted woodland signs which would have passed unobserved by a less experienced forester. While he was knitting his brows in the anguish of his speculation concerning his part in "the conspiracy," a noise in the thicket warned him that a deer was not far away. His Winchester was suspended over one shoulder, so that he could bring it into play at an instant's notice — for he by no means disdained Arch Sixkiller's warning about the Bluelots — and in his cartridge-belt a navy revolver was ready to his hand. Armed as he was, from a decent shelter he would have been able to do fearful execution on an attacking force.

The familiar forest sounds suddenly awakened his old semi-savage enthusiasm. For the time Vera, Ignatius, and all the incidents of and figures in the conspiracy faded away, and his whole attention was concentrated on the fact that a deer was softly moving through the thicket, and would presently be visible in the open. The mystical look fled from the bronze mask, and was replaced by one of intense, half-ferocious attention. He caught his rifle in both hands, examined it, made it ready for instant use, and stood motionless, as if he had been made of iron. So stood his ancestors many a time when they hunted the deer in the glades of Georgia.

All at once the expected deer burst from cover, a palpitating and delicately suspicious thing, and stood snuffing the air, as if fearing that the danger were therein. Pleasant, concealed by a tuft of bushes, dropped on one knee and took aim. But at that moment a shot from another rifle cracked sharply, followed instantly by a

second, and the deer bounded and fell dying. There was a rustling in the leaves opposite Pleasant, and then a tall, elderly, powerfully built half-breed stepped into the open plain.

It was the eldest of the Bluelot brothers, the repulsive and vindictive wretch who had thrown Pleasant into the Grand River when he was but a child; who, rumour said, was the murderer of young Elias Merrinott; and who had just discharged both barrels of his rifle at the unlucky deer.

Pleasant sprang out from his concealment and covered him instantly with his Winchester. "Drop your gun and put up your hands," he cried, in Cherokee, and in loud, ringing tones.

Bluelot and Merrinott, with the slain deer between them, stood glaring at each other.

"Quick!" said Pleasant.

The Bluelot was amazed. He did as bid. His rifle fell on the grass; his hands went up. "You've got the drop on me, Pleasant," he said, sullenly. "But my folks are not far off. Your time's short. I shan't beg. Shoot, you coward!"

"Now, Elias," thought Pleasant, "you are avenged!" The frown on his brow grew murderous. The Bluelot's insult had filled his heart with rage. His time for vengeance had come!

But just as he was about to execute the Bluelot, whose face contracted as he saw the young man's grasp tighten on his Winchester, there arose before him the sweet slopes of the Brunig, and the vale of Meiringen in its peaceful beauty below, and the lines of snow-clad mountains in the background, and he bethought him of the promise which he had made to Alice Harrelston in that charming Swiss retreat only a weeks before. He saw Alice's lovely face again, and he seemed to hear her saying, "Promise me

that, whatever happens, you will do nothing to prolong the feud with the Bluelots, and that if you are brought into contact with them you will never use a weapon unless it is entirely in self-defence."

He had promised. He remembered it now. He had promised to Alice — the lost, the beloved Alice! And that promise must be sacredly kept. The Bluelot had not yet attacked him. Clearly this shot which Pleasant was about to fire would not be absolutely in self-defence — but an act of revenge.

He threw the Winchester into the thicket; took the revolver from his belt, and pitched it after the Winchester; then, folding his arms, said to the astonished Bluelot —

"I don't want your blood. Go your way, and I will go mine."

At the same moment his ear caught the sound of footsteps in the thicket. The other Bluelots were, perhaps, at hand. He regretted that he had thrown away both his weapons.

His adversary had lowered his arms, and in his right hand now gleamed a loaded pistol.

"They told me you was half cracked," he said, in English, "and now I reckon I'll have to believe 'em. You don't want my blood, don't ye? Mighty kind, ain't ye, now? Wal, I *do* want yourn; but I'll give ye a chance. Run, ye coward, and mebbe I won't hit ye! Skip, now, or ye're a dead man!"

He took deliberate aim at the young man's heart.

"Run?" said the youth. "A Merrinott run? From a Bluelot?" And he stood motionless.

The footsteps grew louder, came hastily nearer; there were many voices. "Come on, boys," shouted the Bluelot, fancying himself addressing his brother and their sons, "here's something that will please ye."

Pleasant fancied that the earth rocked beneath his

feet, but he maintained his bold front. In another minute, he thought, all will be over.

There was a loud shout. "Strangers!" cried the Bluelot, with an oath, and, fearful lest his prey might escape him, he fired. Pleasant unfolded his arms, and in a moment or two fell face downward on the grass. At the same instant the Bluelot was felled by a heavy blow from the butt of a carbine, and two or three soldiers ran forward to the spot where Pleasant was lying. Behind them came a tall man in travelling dress, who, after gazing in amazement for a minute, raised the prostrate form gently in his arms.

"I am afraid," he said, "that this time my interference in this wretched feud has come too late."

Pleasant gave no sign of life.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

ALICE TO THE RESCUE.

THE day on which Pleasant was to give his answer to the Indians whom he was supposed to have cheated and offended had arrived. Morning dawned delightfully, as it always does even in November in the beautiful South-western Territory; then about nine o'clock came a slight snow fall, which seemed ashamed of its intrusion upon a land in which the birds sing all winter, and which is nearest neighbour to semi-tropical Texas; and finally arrived a scorching noonday, which banished the snow, leaving only slender memorials of it in glittering tears on the stubble of the corn, on the symmetrical trees, and on the waving grasses upon a huge mysterious mound not far from Pleasant's dwelling. By the time that Arch Six-killer had sighted the long procession of stern-looking Indians, arriving in single file, mounted upon shaggy horses, sun and gentle breezes had done their best to prove that winter was only an audacious intruder, who had strayed over the frontier, to be driven back ingloriously, like Pleasant's enemies who wished to squat upon the fat lands of the Nation.

Within the farmhouse silence reigned. The mottled hounds seemed to know that something was wrong, and were moodily reclining on the broad doorsteps, feigning

sleep, but starting uneasily at the slightest sound outside, as if well aware that their master lay at death's door within, and must on no account be disturbed. Two farm hands, who looked more like warriors of the epoch of the ancient Cherokee grandeur than like common labourers, stood beside a rude fence, holding themselves proudly erect, as if anticipating attack. It would not be too much to say that this is exactly what they *did* expect, and that they were prepared to defend the Merrinott hearthstone to the uttermost.

Afar off could be heard the solemn and harmonious flow of a great river, moving onward to its junction with the mighty Arkansas. Crows cawed lazily now and then from the tops of the tallest trees, all the time suspiciously eyeing the men below; and from the neighbouring forest came innumerous sounds, which, strangely intermingled, made up a bewildering symphony, fascinating to Alice, as she sat on a rude seat near the house, chatting in an undertone with Arch Sixkiller, who was ready to prostrate himself on the ground before her.

The old Indian half persuaded himself that Alice — this vision of beauty and eloquence and grace and charm which had floated suddenly into the Nation on the day when Pleasant was brought home, half dead from the cruel wound which the vindictive and merciless Bluelot had given him — was at least partially supernatural; that her origin and her arrival could never be satisfactorily accounted for on ordinary grounds; and that, after she had accomplished her mission, she would float away as airily as the fleecy cloud which he saw hovering over a distant peak in the mountain range beyond the wide stream.

Arch's mind, as he answered Alice's numerous and sprightly questions, was torn by doubt. Mr. and Miss Harrelston were undoubtedly in the Cherokee Nation for some important purpose; their mysterious advent on the

day of Pleasant's encounter with the Bluelot had been remarked, and speedily bruited abroad among the discontented Indians who had warned Pleasant that, if his answer to them were not favourable, they would "run him out of the country." What might not the mad passions of the motley crew induce them to do on this day when they were coming for their answer, now that they knew that the very banker who was supposed to be instrumental, in the European market, in prompting the sale of the bonds which were to serve in opening their cherished country to the prying and ambitious white invader, had boldly come to pay Pleasant Merrinott a visit, and had brought his daughter with him? Arch was mystified, and distressed because he was morally bound to join the league against Pleasant. But this latter thing he was secretly resolved not to do; he had made up his mind that, if it came to fighting, he would be found upon his master's side, and would do his best to protect this fair young maiden who had ventured, without knowing it, into one of the most lawless and dangerous corners of the new world.

On Saturday of the week after the tragical end of Vera's troubled existence, Mr. Harrelston and Alice had sailed from Havre for New York. Alice's mother gave her plenty of advice, but, oddly enough, refrained from mentioning the name of the young Indian, probably because she had been enlightened on certain points by the good banker, and, being a sensible woman, realized the hopelessness of fighting against fate. Mr. Harrelston and his daughter remained but one day in New York — a day during which the banker managed, by a little judicious telegraphing to Europe, to turn a few honest pennies, amounting in the aggregate to one hundred and eighty thousand francs — after which they set out at once for the Indian Territory.

Alice was amazed and pleased with the grandiose panorama of progress in the country as their train sped across the flat and fat lands of the West, flashed over the Mississippi, and crawled up the Missouri's side on a railway which made her father shake his head, and express some doubts as to the wisdom of recommending Western railway investments to guileless European capitalists. On and on they sped, past miles and miles of yellow corn-fields; past rude log villages, where ruddy and half-naked children were tumbling over each other in the sun; past quaint German settlements where vineyards and breweries were flourishing; past great woodlands and over Indian reservations, where the blanketed savages came out to gaze and sometimes to jeer at the train. Then their course bent Southward, downward, away from the mud, the mists and snows of the North, to a delicious land where leaves were still green, where the magnolia and the myrtle showed their beauty, and where the invader man had not everywhere begun to ruin nature.

The latter half of the journey was strangely novel to Alice, and had it not been for the intensity of her fear that Pleasant might have already done some rash deed, might have allowed the unwholesome doctrine which had been grafted upon his mind to bring forth terrible fruit, she would have been singularly happy. She felt a certain consolation in what Vera had told her — that Pleasant was no longer bound to undertake the American portion of the conspiracy; yet she trembled and could not sleep. At one of the railway stations, some distance from the frontier of the Indian Territory, the little party entered a "hotel car" — a vast ambulatory house, species of exaggerated Pullman, — in which they were all "as comfortable as they could have been at home," said the ebon youth who superintended the culinary department of this rolling domicile, and his exaggeration was pardonable.

Colonel Cliff had accompanied Alice and her father from Europe to America. On the morning after Vera's death he had visited Alice to inform her that he had not yet been able to discover the exact whereabouts of the young Indian. He was of course greatly surprised and shocked when Alice told him of the touching and painful scene which she had witnessed, and he expressed his joy that the girl had indicated Pleasant's release from his obligation to the conspiracy. Alice then, with a certain dainty modesty, referred him to her father for details about the discovery of Pleasant's refuge, and she expressed no surprise when she saw the Colonel's tall form on the deck of the French steamer at Havre.

She felt a pang because she was compelled to inflict pain upon the self-sacrificing and worthy man, for she was not slow to perceive that he had freely offered himself as a sacrifice upon the altar of his affection for her. It would have been ungracious to refuse or slight the courtly attentions which he lavished upon her while the steamship buffeted the angry waves, and when they were fleeting across the lands toward the Nation. Colonel Cliff did not hesitate to talk freely of Pleasant Merrinott, and it was easy to see that he had relinquished all hope of ever thereafter appearing as a possible rival to the eccentric and erratic young Indian.

Alice, freed from the doubts of Pleasant's loyalty, speedily recovered her animation and all the subtle splendour of her beauty. In the grave which her father's tender and all-embracing charity had provided for the misguided Russian girl had been buried Alice's last fear that Pleasant himself might be wrested from her by human agency. All that she feared now was that he might be irrevocably wedded to an idea; to his eagerness to avenge himself upon that society by which he believed that he had been so bitterly wronged.

When the "hotel car," which had the honours of a special engine and a particular schedule, furnished to Mr. Harrelston by the railway builders who were eager to obtain his influence and his aid in Europe, had reached a point on the road nearly opposite the eminence on which stands Fort Gibson in the Indian Territory, the party was visited by a delegation of army officers to whom Colonel Cliff had sent despatches, and who were delighted once more to see their comrade of other days. The good Colonel organized an observation party, escorted by the officers and twenty stout cavalrymen, and it had been his kindly intention that Alice and her father should, without their previous knowledge, suddenly find themselves on the Merrinott farm, and that they might then and there meet the Indian.

"If he does not then throw away his silly prejudices, and make love in earnest, he is no man," said the Colonel to himself, sadly.

The small company went forth upon its tour, and chance brought it, on the morning when Pleasant encountered the Bluelot brother, to the very wood on the edge of which Pleasant was called upon to win the victory over himself, to remember his promise to Alice, and to refuse vengeance upon the enemy whom he momentarily held within his power. Colonel Cliff and two or three of the officers were a little ahead of Alice, her father, and the others, and reached the combatants just as the Bluelot fired his revolver at Pleasant, and the young Indian fell. Ten minutes later Alice was beside the man whom she loved, and she believed him mortally wounded. The cry which burst from her lips, as the senseless Pleasant was borne away, completely enlightened her father, if he had required any enlightenment, as to the depth and earnestness of his daughter's affection. The whole party accompanied the wounded man to the Merri-

nott house, and from that moment Mr. Harrelston's mind was made up.

The stunned Bluelot was secured, and in due time was handed over to the tender mercies of the local officer of Cherokee law. But on the very first night of his incarceration he managed to break out of the primitive jail, and, with his kindred, who were hovering in the neighbourhood, made for a secure retreat, intending to lie hidden for a few days, until he heard what turn Pleasant's affairs had taken. If the young Indian did not die, the Bluelot felt certain that he would be expelled by the angered Indians, who believed themselves deceived; and if he died, the lengthy feud would have ended in the triumph of Bluelots over Merrinotts.

Messengers were despatched in all directions for skilful physicians, and among those who arrived was one from the fort, who at first gave up hope of saving Pleasant, but on the morning of the third day announced that there were a few signs of encouragement. The bullet from the Bluelot's revolver had made an ugly wound in Pleasant's left side; it had been aimed at his heart, but the would-be murderer had been disturbed in time to spoil the accuracy of his aim.

Pleasant was delirious, and raved of his "duty," and on the second afternoon, while Alice and Mr. Harrelston were standing for a few moments at his bedside, he cried out in piercing tones that he must proceed at once to Washington; that he had a vengeance to accomplish; that he would be too late, and would be for ever dishonoured. Then he murmured of Vera, of Bakounin; and many an incoherent fragment of the insidious and terrible doctrine of destruction escaped his lips. The army doctor was amazed, and looked inquiringly at the others. The tears in the eyes of Alice indicated that she partially understood the cause of the poor youth's

ravings; but she bowed her head and went slowly out of the room, her father following her.

It was the mental anguish which the doctors feared more than the physical trouble. Pleasant had an Indian constitution underlying his impressionable and sensitive nervous organization of half-breed; and the body would under ordinary conditions have been proof against a wound to which a white man bred in a city would have succumbed. But the constant delirium and the terrible strain upon the young man's brain was alarming, and the doctor from the fort looked grave even while he spoke encouragingly. Every one took utmost pains to keep from Pleasant's knowledge, in his brief lucid intervals, the fact of the presence of Alice and her father.

The Indian mother followed the movements of Alice greedily with her coal-black eyes, but she manifested neither resentment nor curiosity. She was all Indian and impassive in her demeanour. She felt that the time would soon come when all would be explained. The wide rooms offered the visitors were comfortable, and Colonel Cliff, Alice, and Mr. Harrelston settled in them as if they had come to spend the winter. Meantime the "hotel car" waited on a siding, and small mountains of mail matter, forwarded from this car, at which they were left by the "through train" daily, astonished the eyes of the local postmaster, who himself trudged four miles each morning to bring Mr. Harrelston his letters and papers. To all inquiring missives the banker made one stereotyped reply, that he was "seeing the country and taking a little much needed rest."

And now, on the morning of the fifth day after Pleasant's narrow escape from instant death, Alice sat on the old bench near the garden fence, waiting patiently, as she had waited so long, for Pleasant to recover his senses, his health — and then! She knew not what might come then,

but she felt that she had acted wisely in coming with her father; and the light of a great hope filled her heart, although the doctors' faces were dark. As she was talking with Arch, she observed that he was somewhat abstracted, and although his brown face was as quiet as if carved in stone, her quick womanly perceptions told her that he was agitated. At the same time she caught sight of the motley procession of Indians approaching on horseback, and something in their appearance — a certain grimness and concerted severity — alarmed her..

"Arch," she said, playfully, "why do you not wear the — the national dress, like that Indian in blanket and feathers — there — behind all the others. It is much prettier than the slouch hat, the homespun, and the heavy boots worn by white folks. Don't you think so?"

The old man frowned, and glanced around hastily. "I reckon ye better move away a bit," he said. "You wouldn't want to see them fellers, I don't guess."

"Why are they coming here? Speak out, Arch, and tell me who they are!"

"They're only just some of the neighbours," gasped Arch, who felt moved by a sudden impulse to tell Alice all. Perhaps she would find a way out of the difficulty.

"And what do these extraordinary neighbours want? They ride up as if they had come to besiege the house."

Then the old man broke down, and told her the whole story. She listened with paling face, but before he had finished there was the light of a fine inspiration on her brow.

"Surely," she stammered, "they would not dare — they would not be so cruel as to take any harsh measures against Mr. Merrinott while he is lying at the point of death. And all for a miserable mistake! They have entirely misunderstood the matter!"

"I knowed it!" cried old Arch, who was rejoiced at the prospect of a way out of his dilemma.

"But would they — do any harm?"

"Wal, they might," answered the old Cherokee, solemnly. "They're right rough 'bout these yer land matters."

"Very well, then. I must talk to them myself! No, no, it will be fun! I *wish* to do it!" she added, as the old man made a deprecatory gesture, which consisted of putting one hand straight out before him. And she had arisen and fluttered away from the seat before the Cherokee could rub his eyes.

Half way to the farmhouse-door she turned, and waving her hand to Arch, cried merrily —

"Get them ranged in a line down by the open field, and make them wait for me. But don't let them come near the house, or make any noise."

Arch decided to do his best to carry out her commands, even if he got his skull cracked for his pains.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE CLOCK OF DESTINY STRIKES.

STANISLAS sat before the piano, looking out at the window upon the vines and flowers, and lazily evoking bits of melody from the instrument, which he seemed to find a certain pleasure in caressing.

He was at Cannes, as the guest of a Russian Princess somewhat renowned in cosmopolitan society for the splendidly reckless manner in which she disposed of a colossal fortune, as well as for her sparkling beauty, her elaborate toilettes, and the elasticity of her morals. She had a husband somewhere — but he rarely appeared upon the scene, and left the Princess to the full enjoyment of a liberty of which she took such advantage as her caprices dictated. In winter she held a species of pseudo-court at Cannes, to which charming southern retreat she annually migrated, partly because of an affection of the throat, and partly because she found there the company of which she was most fond. Gifted with fine intellectual powers, she succeeded in drawing around her a circle which comprised men and women of talent and exquisite refinement; she could entertain two score guests in her house at one time; and artists, actors, musicians, the romancers in vogue, and the soldiers who were the darlings of the moment, considered it a privilege

to be admitted into the magic domain which lay behind the high and massive wall inclosing her garden and villa.

It was to this place that Stanislas had hastened, as to a refuge, after he had learned of the death of Vera. He had not even had the courage to return to his lodgings in the Boulevard Malesherbes to see the dead girl who had loved him so passionately, but who had smothered her wild love, and treated him as her brother in the revolutionary movement which he had now caused to fail. There was one visit which he *had* been compelled to make, and that was to the police commissary of the quarter, who sent for him, and interrogated him so closely that Stanislas quite lost his temper, and explained in a lofty manner that he enjoyed the protection of important personages. The police functionary seemed satisfied that there was nothing of which the musician could be accused. The attendant physician and Alice and the small girl-servant had all furnished testimony which indicated that Vera had died from natural causes; yet Stanislas could not help observing that the commissary seemed to allow him to depart with a certain regret, and but ill concealed an extraordinary repulsion for him.

This puzzled the musician. He was shocked and a little pained at Vera's sudden departure into the unknown world beyond. But it was his artistic temperament rather than his heart that suffered. It did not occur to him that he was in truth a vile traitor, deserving scorn of all honest and true souls. He regarded himself in the light of an unfortunate and careless person, who had been entrapped into disagreeable circumstances which had now culminated in a tragedy. The infinitely pitiful character of Vera's mistaken self-sacrifice did not present itself to his mind at all; he was annoyed, disturbed, vexed, that he should have had his *rôle* condemned by the stern girl with the sinister purpose, and that she should have had the

bad taste to mourn over his defection, and to choose such an inappropriate time to die. Had she lived, and forgiven him, he might have found it in his heart to bestow a few crumbs of love upon her — for a season.

The more he reflected upon the matter, the more strongly did he persuade himself that he had acted magnanimously toward the girl in shielding her from punishment, and he congratulated himself upon that as an excellent sop for his conscience, if that monitor should ever become troublesome. He was glad when he learned that a charitable friend, who desired that his name might not be disclosed, had arranged with the funeral company of the city for Vera's proper burial in a corner of a small cemetery outside the walls of Paris. That discreet benefactor had smoothed away all difficulties, so that poor Vera slept among respectable dead folks — she, the Nihilist, the destructionist, whose grave might have been in the "common ditches!" had it not been for the goodness of heart of a man who had never seen her alive.

Stanislas had kept no servants since his return to Paris in the autumn; he consequently had none to dismiss. He employed a valet, gave him instructions to pack up a few personal effects, and to close the apartment, — leaving poor Vera's small possessions under seal as they had been placed by the authorities the morning after her death — and then to follow him to Cannes. The story of his efficient action as an agent of the Russian Government in unearthing a Nihilist conspiracy had got abroad, and when Stanislas appeared at the villa of the Princess, who was a warm advocate of autocracy and its continuance in Russia, he received a cordial welcome.

A few carefully-worded phrases, dropped from time to time, served to show the lady that Stanislas was a bit apprehensive of the vengeance of the conspirators or their friends, and she assured him that he could count

on perfect safety so long as he remained her guest. Knowing that the local police were zealous in protecting the Princess from annoyance, he regained confidence a trifle, and at the end of a few days the image of old Ignatius no longer haunted him. A letter from a diplomatic friend in Paris informed him that the aged Jew had been arrested in Switzerland, but a second epistle announced that this was an error, and that the French police were much mortified at being compelled to confess that the ancient plotter had slipped through their hands. This last missive caused a most disagreeable sensation in the mind of Stanislas.

It must not be supposed that the musician had suffered in spirits, or had felt his dignity ruffled, by the rebuff which he had received at the hands of the innocent and honest Caro. He did not appreciate the depths of his own insincerity — to call it by no harsher name — nor was he unselfish enough to regret that he had left a deep wound in the young girl's heart. Himself a creature of impulse, utterly unchecked by principle, and hindered by no feeling of responsibility to that society on the edges of which he hovered, as a brilliant bird of song flits along the border of a garden filled with precious flowers — it did not seem to him that he had done any thing unnatural or dishonest in tempting Caro to a flight which could have ended only in shame for her, or at least in false appearance which would have done her irreparable harm.

In his intellectual nature every thing was well ordered, noble, rich with accomplishment, harmonious and impressive; in his moral nature disorder reigned supreme. He had no rule of conduct, nor would he have been likely to admit the possibility of establishing one. He had so long been accustomed to mistake the stormy appeal of passion for a stern decree of fate that he bowed before it. The romance of life was doubled for him by his belief that he

must obey his impulses — that they were voices of nature calling him to the fulfillment of his destiny. No matter if those he came in contact with were ruined; that he did not take into consideration as a serious calamity, ascribing it to some fatal weakness in their mental and physical organisms for which he was in no wise responsible.

The firm opposition which the American girl had made to his mad project, at a moment when she was crushed beneath a humiliating failure in her art, and when her love for him had been increased tenfold by the sympathy which she bestowed on him in his dangerous situation — this opposition, coupled with an indignation so spontaneous and withering, had amazed him. He had thought that Caro would sacrifice any thing and every thing for him; but at the very slightest breath of license, she shrank away from him as if his touch were contaminating. What was this type of woman to which he was unaccustomed? Evidently the feminine natures in the New World were different from those in the Old; were less impulsive; were, perhaps, better balanced; — at least, they were to him a mystery. And he had almost determined to puzzle his brains no more about it, when the Princess one day brought him word that Miss Caro Merlin and her mother had taken modest apartments in a quiet corner of Cannes.

The Princess had been enlightened as to Miss Merlin's identity with the unlucky girl who had fainted at La Vange's concert, by a friend who was present on that exciting occasion, and who had known that Stanislas professed an interest in the American maiden's welfare. So the hostess told Stanislas, in the hope that some romance might be hidden away beneath this acquaintance of the distinguished pianist with the fair aspirant from beyond the Atlantic, and that he would tell the story.

Stanislas pricked up his ears when he heard that Caro was in the neighbourhood. He was vain enough to

fancy that the poor child had heard of his retreat, and had determined to make the first advance toward reconciliation by coming nearer him. He felt flattered, and touched, and made up his mind to call upon Caro and her mother at an early day; to insist upon seeing them; to assert that, after a proper explanation, they could not refuse to pardon him; and — if worst came to worst — to attribute his conduct to an inexplicable impulse born of an artistic temperament. It was with the air of a general about to return to a field where he had been defeated, but resolved this time to conquer, that he mused on the best means of resuming relations with the brave little singer.

Meantime Caro and her mother had not the remotest idea that Stanislas was near them. If they had suspected his presence at the handsome villa on the hill not far from their lodgings, they would have begun their preparations for departure. Mrs. Merlin had brought her daughter to Cannes for a season of absolute repose, by direction of one of the best American physicians in Paris. Caro had been seriously ill — but for a few days only. With Spartan firmness she had pulled from the wound the arrow with which Stanislas had pierced her spirit, and yet she had not succumbed. She had had a bitter and terrible deception; it had sobered, steadied, and refined her; she was more beautiful, more quiet, more resolved than ever, when, after her short but sharp illness, she accompanied her patient mother in the retreat from the harsh Paris winter to the beautiful city where the roses bloom in December, and where the sun shines with generous fervour in midwinter. Of Stanislas she rarely spoke, and it was her wish that his name should not be mentioned in her presence. Her friends had succeeded in persuading her that she had in no wise injured her career by her unfortunate fainting fit at the concert; that that was an accident beyond her control; and that in spring,

when she had recovered strength, she would do well to make another trial. Mélari was working for her. There were moments when she felt as if the battle were not lost, after all.

* * * * * *

The musician fell to musing anew about Caro, as he sat in the Princess's odd and elegant Japanese pavilion, erected in a corner of the garden, and led up to by a flight of broad, handsome marble steps. This pavilion was the resort of the guests at the villa when they took tea and music together in the long dreamy afternoons; but toward evening and at night it was usually deserted. Stanislas was so absorbed in his reverie that he did not notice the quick approach of the soft southern twilight, and when he at last came out of his abstraction it was quite dark within the pavilion. Outside he could dimly distinguish the serpentine bodies of the ancient vines straggling over the wall; he noted a few night birds flying swiftly in circles; and he heard some peasants in the street below talking *patois* in a high pitched key, following their remarks with loud and prolonged laughter.

He glanced nervously about him, and arose from the piano. Since his defection from the ranks of the Nihilist conspirators he was averse to being alone after dark. A nameless terror now seized upon him, and he resolved to get back to the villa speedily. Its white walls gleamed invitingly among the foliage some hundreds of yards away. But, when he started to go down the stairs, he trembled, and drew back in such a timid manner that he blushed for himself. After standing irresolutely, for some moments, at the door, he went back to the piano, and sat down again. There was no sound in the pretty little room, which was richly furnished with Japanese screens, and vases, bronze images of birds and beasts and gods and goddesses.

Presently Stanislas determined to make some music, hoping to allay his fears. But it seemed to him that he could hear the beating of his own heart above every other sound as he played on and on, now improvising, now executing with wonderful delicacy a Hungarian waltz or martial march, now rendering with exquisite sweetness and fidelity a bit from one of Beethoven's sonatas. By-and-by the music reassured him; he lost himself in it; so that he was not alarmed when he heard steps on the marble stairs outside, and a hand on the wooden latch of the pretty Japanese door. It seemed to him but natural that one of the servants should have come to warn him that it was time to dress for dinner.

The steps came nearer. Stanislas turned, and all the blood in his body seemed frozen for a moment, for he saw an old man, with a scarred and wrinkled face, and with a long white beard, standing before him. At last! There was then no escape! He passed his hand over his forehead, and opened his eyes widely, hoping that he might find himself the victim of an optical illusion. But this hope vanished, for the figure spoke, and it said, in Polish, and with the unmistakable accent of old Ignatius —

"The clock of destiny strikes once to-day. When it strikes again, the new world will arise on the ruins of the old. But first it strikes to destroy a traitor!"

Stanislas sank back, breathless, half fainting; then, swiftly recovering himself, he arose and resolved to rush at Ignatius. But Ignatius was no longer there. Again came the vague hope that it might all be a dream — the work of a heated fancy, — a terror-evoked image. He must have lights! The garden must be searched! He moved unsteadily toward the outer door.

But at that instant there was a loud explosion, and the stone floor of the pavilion was wrenched and torn into thousands of fragments, and the bronzes and the richly

upholstered chairs and the piano disappeared. Flames seized upon the light wood-work; a suffocating odour filled the air; a smoke arose; and when the frightened attendants of the Princess came running to the scene of the disaster, the pavilion was burning rapidly. Underneath a mass of stone and wood lay Stanislas, dead, and with his beautiful head bruised into a grotesque shape. Dead! At the first stroke of the clock of destiny!

* * * * * *

Caro saw the flames from her window, but happily knew nothing of the cause of the conflagration until many days thereafter. It seemed to her that night, however, as if the hold that Stanislas had so long had upon her heart finally relaxed just as the fire showed its light against the sky.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

CALM AFTER STORM.

"THINK that it was but a dream — a harsh and cruel dream," said Alice, gently.

She was sitting beside the great chair covered with the dressed skins of animals on which Pleasant reclined, and from time to time the young Indian laid his hand tenderly on her brow, with a caress that had in it all the earnestness of a lover, but little of his old impetuousness. Pleasant was at rest now; his life had become a joy — a blessing; and his future lay bright before him. Yet he felt as if he had emerged, bruised and fatigued, from a terrible struggle. With the calm now so enchanting had come a physical and mental weakness which astonished him. There were moments when he was still a trifle uncertain as to his own identity; when he felt like touching Alice to prove to his senses that she were really no apparition. He contemplated the spectacle of his return into the normal state of things in the world much as mariners, who have outridden a storm in which they fully expected to perish, look at each other and at their good ship, when by some singular chance they come safely into port.

Alice had been telling him of the death of Vera, and how he was consequently freed from the terrible obligation which he had incurred. There was a strange tremor in

the girl's voice as she recited, rapidly, and in picturesque fashion, the events which had occurred after the Indian's sudden departure from Paris. Pleasant listened, now and then endeavouring to dispel a host of confused images assembling before his vision.

Vera dead! The conspiracy at an end — unsuccessful! The disciples of Bakounin dispersed! The world was not to crumble into ruins, then — society was not to be destroyed; the *new world* of which they had seen such grandiose visions was not to spring, a blessed Atlantis, a bewitching Arcadia, from the chaos of the ancient one! And *he* — Pleasant Merrinott — representative of a wronged and insulted and betrayed race — *he* was not to be called on to sacrifice his life in order that society might be punished for its injustices, its gross neglect? It seemed, indeed, as if it had all been a dream.

A deeper colour came into his swarthy cheeks as he remembered how he had unwittingly tortured poor Alice; how he had trifled with the priceless gift of her love, her devotion; how he had cast away her affection because it interfered with his miserable pride of race; and how unwaveringly true to him she had been despite his follies, his frailties, and his caprices. His distress of mind was so great, as he reviewed his mistakes, and the dangers into which he had almost wilfully thrust himself, that a low groan escaped his lips.

The girl sprang up hastily, with paling face. "You are suffering again," she said, with that exquisite sympathy in her voice which women can manifest only for the men they love. "I was wrong to tell you all these dreadful things to-day. Oh! I shall never forgive myself! Would it not be best for you to return to your room and try to rest?"

Pleasant's right hand strayed to that of Alice, and for the first time since his illness he felt a bit of his old

strength returning. He drew the girl slowly back to his side, and kissed her, reverently, on her forehead.

"No, Alice," he said. "I am at rest, here with you; I am no longer ill; my wound will heal; I shall be strong again — strong to love you, and to prove my repentance. I have been — a dreamer; but I will be so no more. Can you forgive me?"

"There is nothing to forgive," she said, looking up with glistening eyes into his face. And for an instant the youth felt that the tears of love were sweeter than its smiles.

The lovers were in the large front room of the Merrinott farm-house. The door was open, and a gentle breeze strayed in to stir the ashes in the huge fireplace, and the festoons of evergreen on the deer's horns from which guns and hunter's trappings were suspended. Brilliant sunshine flooded the broad, open spaces between the belt of forest and the farm; birds sang in the trees as merrily as if it were August; and the roar of the river in the distance was imposing. Pleasant had besought Alice to tell him how it happened that Mr. Harrelston had so suddenly determined to visit the Nation, and she had answered vaguely that she believed it "had some reference to the railroad matter."

The Indian put on his scowl, for the "railroad matter" awakened numerous painful recollections. "I believe," he said, "that in my craziness about this Bakounin business" (he had confessed to her his complete temporary infatuation with it), "the railroad affairs, the bonds, the rights of the Indians, and everything of that sort, had vanished from my mind. I have been more stupid than I supposed it possible to be."

Presently he looked up, still with bewildered air, and said, "Tell me — how many days is it since — since I had my encounter with the Bluelot?"

"Almost twenty."

"Twenty days? Then *they* have not been here? What can it mean? While I have been in bed — have there been no — no Indians here to see me? I might as well tell you that I have asked the same question of my mother and of Arch Sixkiller this morning, and that they both avoided answering it in a manner which was right exasperating; they left the room powerful quick. Now, Alice, tell me the truth, please."

"Yes, said the girl, releasing her hand, not without difficulty, from her lover's grasp, "there were some Indians here to see you the other day — a great many of them, in fact. It was of course impossible for them to visit you; so Arch and I ——"

"When was it?"

"It was the fifth or sixth day after you were wounded."

"The time appointed!" whispered Pleasant to himself. "And they left no message — nothing for me?"

Alice had arisen, and her eyes sparkled with merriment, while blushes stole into her cheeks. "Since you must know, exacting invalid," she said, "I will tell you how they came. But first you must promise to lie back in that chair and to remain motionless. Remember what the doctor said about sudden movements. Do you promise?"

Pleasant promised, and assumed the impassibility of a bronze statue, although he was fiercely agitated within.

"They all came — the most ridiculous collection of people I ever saw," — said Alice, laughing, "one morning while Arch and I were talking in the garden. Some of them looked like Italian brigands, some like French peasants, and some like old women with blackened faces, and with feathers in their hair! There was one venerable party who had something on his head that resembled a stew-pan with a brace of rabbits in it. Forgive me for

being merry at the expense of your countrymen, but it was too amusing! They ranged themselves in a row in front of the house, and with their guns and pistols they looked very ferocious, I assure you. But did you not promise to lie still?"

"Well, what did they say?" queried the young Indian impatiently.

The girl's face grew grave and pale. "What did they say?" she repeated. "I don't think I understood it all."

She stepped back from Pleasant's side as she heard brisk footsteps at the entrance; and, looking around, she saw a tall figure in the doorway.

"Here comes Colonel Cliff from his shooting excursion," she said. "Perhaps he can tell you what the Indians wanted." She looked steadfastly at the good Colonel a moment, and placed her fingers on her lips as if enjoining him to maintain silence on some particular topic.

The Colonel smiled, a little wearily, and looked, first at Pleasant, then at the girl, as if he were anxious to read their secret thoughts. As he stepped forward to the fireplace to lay his gun across the deer's horns, Alice slipped noiselessly out of the room.

"Stronger to-day, Pleasant?" said Colonel Cliff, approaching the young man, and laying one hand gently upon his shoulder. "You *look* quite strong and happy. Ah! the young lady has vanished! I understand. Do you know, Mr. Merrinott, that you are the luckiest of men?"

"Why do you say that, Colonel?" queried the Indian, scowling, in spite of his determination to be amiable to the man whom he was daily learning to respect and love. "You look mysterious. Ah! — Miss Harrelston — is mysterious also. What is all this mystery about? You must each account to me."

"Now don't endanger your existence, Pleasant, by moving in that violent fashion, and glaring after Miss Harrelston. She has gone, and I am not sorry, for in her absence I propose to disobey her injunction, and to tell you something which I think you should know."

"Yes; tell me why you think me a lucky man," said Pleasant, eagerly.

"Very well. Don't interrupt, and please don't get angry. Mr. Merrinott, the young girl who has just left us has saved your life — and your honour. I respectfully submit that you are a lucky man to have such a defender."

"Go on — please go on," murmured Pleasant, vaguely conscious that he was now to hear about the visit of the Indian delegation.

"I am bound to inform you, Mr. Pleasant Merrinott, citizen of the Cherokee Nation," continued the Colonel, smiling, "that your worthy fellow-citizens had conceived a violent prejudice against you. Like most benefactors, it was your lot to be misunderstood. This delegation of Indians had come to expel you from your house and from your Nation, because they believed you had been a traitor to the mission which they had placed in your hands. They had called on you for an explanation — to be given on the fifth day after their first visit to you ——"

"Yes — yes!"

— "Meantime, no answer had been vouchsafed by his haughty Highness Pleasant Merrinott, and strange people — even the banker whom Mr. Merrinott had been to Paris to see — had arrived at the Merrinott farm. The Indians were enraged. They fancied that their lands were in danger; that the banker, and possibly the banker's daughter, were boldly plotting in their midst to steal their fat acres. They refused to believe that you had been dangerously wounded by the Bluelot, and declared that that was a pretext to avoid meeting them face to face.

Some of them had gone so far as to move toward the house, with the intention of finding you."

Pleasant's gaze wandered to his Winchester rifle. The Colonel observed this.

"Exactly," he said. "If you had been well, you would have indulged in a shooting match with the Indians, and you would infallibly have been killed. But you were in bed — unconscious — and so — and so — a young and lovely girl was allowed to intervene in your behalf, and to save the situation. It was fine! Mr. Harrelston and I happened to be snugly ensconced in a small thicket, from which we could see and hear everything; and when the good banker saw his daughter standing on a chair, and making a speech to that grim Indian delegation ——"

"She! Alice! A speech! To that wild pack of half-breeds!"

"Oh, they were not remarkably wild, after she began to talk. She made them a regular address. Most of them understood English, and she made Arch Sixkiller translate to the rest. She told them that they had been entirely mistaken; that, instead of being a traitor to them, you were their faithful friend and sovereign protector; that, rather than unsuccessful, you had been successful in the highest degree; that, because of your representations — and all this time she was making plenty of gestures — the distinguished banker, Mr. Harrelston, had come over from Paris to investigate the matter of the bonds and the land grants; and that, because of your protest, and after a careful examination, Mr. Harrelston had decided not to take any part in the sale of the railway bonds in question, either in Europe or anywhere else! 'In fact, gentlemen,' she said, 'Mr. Merrinott's mission has been, as you see, so thorough a success that you owe him a vote of thanks, or an apology for having doubted him, and you should at once send him back to Europe as your agent, for no one

else can do you such good service.' Then she jumped down from the chair, and went and shook hands with every one of them. And then — and then Arch gave them some whiskey all round. All the old black things with feathers in their hair said 'Ugh!' and smiled."

Pleasant closed his eyes. He would not have liked the Colonel to know that there were tears in them.

"The next thing that Miss Harrelston did," continued Colonel Cliff, "was to draw up a paper, appointing you anew as the Indians' trusted delegate in Europe. When this was finished, Mr. Harrelston and your humble servant could remain hidden no longer. We had to come out and congratulate Alice — although I think Mr. Harrelston was rather annoyed, you know. And, furthermore, we had to shake hands with all the Indians. In fact, they who came for war and bloodshed, went away as peacefully as lambs. And it was that noble girl who managed it all!" The Colonel's voice grew husky. "Yes, Pleasant, you are a lucky man."

Pleasant extended his hand feebly. "It was good of you to tell me this," he said. "I do not deserve such luck — such happiness."

"Nonsense, man; you merit it all." His face became pallid. "You have found a treasure, my boy," he said. Then he turned away from the young Indian, and after pacing to and fro a little while, he went out.

An hour afterwards Alice stole in, hoping to find Pleasant asleep. But his lustrous eyes were fixed upon her as she approached him.

"Will you — will you show me my appointment — my new commission as agent?" he asked.

Alice grew rosy. "Colonel Cliff is a monster," she said. "He has betrayed me."

"Oh, Alice!"

The girl made an odd little gesture, expressive of anger at

the Colonel, and took from her pocket a small paper which she held out to her lover. Pleasant seized it and read it eagerly. A glad surprise lit up his face as he cried —

"Why, you say here that Mr. Harrelston has decided to withdraw entirely from this railroad matter. Entirely! I knew he would not do anything that was unjust, but to withdraw fully is an odd thing for a business man who had engaged in an enterprise to do. I want to thank him, to tell him how much I appreciate his delicacy, for our Indian prejudices against railroads are right strong."

Alice looked confused, and turned her face away. "Well," she said, naïvely, "to be strictly accurate, I must tell you that papa had not, at the time of my speech, said in so many words that he would give up all participation in the matter. But he had told me before leaving Paris that this year he would give me the fulfilment of any wish that I might express, for my New Year's present, you know. Any wish whatsoever, within human scope, he had said. So I resolved to ask him to withdraw from this railroad affair, in accordance with your protest, and, as I knew he would not refuse me, I told the Indians in my speech that they might consider it done."

"What did your father say?"

The girl laughed merrily. "When he read the paper, he grumbled a little, but very gently, and — and — he was kind enough to say that the heart was sometimes a safer guide than the head in matters of business; and that perhaps this was such a case. So he fulfilled his promise — and — and —— But you are excited!"

"Darling," said Pleasant, "you have saved my honour, my reputation! You have done more: you have saved my life!"

"And was not my life saved by you, in the Swiss mountains?" answered Alice.

* * * * * *

In her dreams that night the girl had a vision of a dark face, more fascinating because of its very darkness; a face which the ladies of society declared — when Pleasant and Alice were married, and went to spend their honeymoon in Nice, twelve months afterwards — to be "quite aristocratic, refined, and Italian."

THE END.

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